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Through the Forty Days

ADDRESSES

For Lenten and Lay Reading

By
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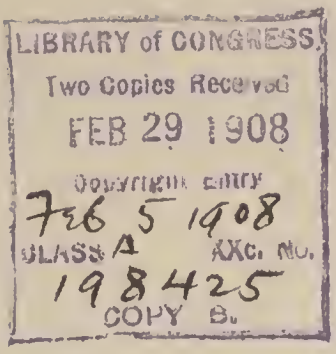

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To my wife, whose wisdom and goodness have been more to me than I am able to express, I dedicate this little book.

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"DUST TO DUST."

Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.—*Genesis* 3 : 19.

We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.—2 *Cor.* 5 : 1.

Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.—1 *John* 3 : 2.

"DUST thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." This was not written of thee, O my soul, but of that part of thee that will soon perish, come to an end, cease to be. Thy body is dust, and unto dust it must return. As over millions and millions of other bodies in time past, so over thine also will soon be said, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust." It will be said of thy body : not of thee,

> "Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
> Was not spoken of the soul."

On this Ash Wednesday the Church bids thee think of what dies and of what lives.

Thy body will die. It is always dying, but in God's mercy it has been renewed day by day. Every moment of every hour thy whole life long God has breathed into it the breath of life. But thou must soon part with it, this poor body that has sheltered thee so long: that thou hast so loved, provided for and pampered; yes, and sinned against. It has been the occasion to thee of sin, of sorrow, of humiliation, of pain. On the whole it has served thee better than thou deservedst. While it is still with thee thou shouldest keep it in temperance, soberness and chastity. Honor thy body: it is the temple of the Holy Ghost; then when thou shalt part with it, thou shalt have a better body. An inspired apostle said, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body:" not there will be, but there is now a spiritual body. Nor that only: he said, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Still another apostle said, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Remember, then, O my soul, how short thy stay here is: how soon thou must move out of this earthly house of thy bodily frame; how soon thou must pass out of the shadows into the light that will make manifest who thou art. It will be an awesome hour. Mayest thou find mercy of the Lord in that day. That thou mayest, think, consider now, in the time of this mortal life, what will die and what will live. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye and the pride of life," all thy present earthly anxieties, ambitions, hopes and fears: all these things that now so engross thy thoughts, will die, perish, cease to be. If therefore thou livest only for these things, then thou shalt perish with them, and of thee it may be said as it was of Ninus, the Assyrian, "Ninus, who wore a mitre, is only a heap of dust."

Ash Wednesday bids thee think of what dies and of what will live. It says, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." It asks of thee what of thee is imperishable. Soon over thy dead body it will be said, "Ashes to ashes; dust to dust." And what then? What will remain? Only dust and ashes? Ashes are what is left when the wood is burned and the flame is dead.

When, as soon must be, the flame of thy mortal life burns low, and finally flickers out, what will be left? The cold dead ashes of a wasted life, or a good example, good words, good works? It is said of the righteous, "Their works do follow them."

Mayest thou have part with them, O my soul: and that it may be so bethink thee of what will live: whatsoever has allied itself with the Eternal, with the Eternal God through His Eternal Son, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and forever"—whatsoever is good, true, righteous, unselfish, like unto Him who said, "Because I live ye shall live also," and, "This is eternal life that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

Think what He must have meant in saying, "Abide in Me," and, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die," and what His apostle meant in saying, "The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

"Whate'er thou lovest best,
E'en that become thou must,
Christ's, if thou lovest Christ,
Dust if thou lovest Dust."

FASTING.

When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.—*St. Matt.* 6: 16–18.

It should be borne in mind that fasting and abstinence are Christian only when practised for the love of God and His better service. The motives that may move men to fast are manifold, and not necessarily Christian or commendable. The miserly man may, from the meanest motive, be "in fastings often," and yet for all his fasting, he is a miserable man.

Fasting and abstinence are Christian only when practised for the love of God and man. The Church has in her "Table of Fasts" only two days which are absolute fasts: namely, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. But even these days should not be observed as absolute fasts by the sick, the very young, the very old, or by those engaged in laborious or very exacting work. Still, all members of the Church

might, and should, make Ash Wednesday and Good Friday as strictly days of fasting as their duties and circumstances permit. Neither will the faithful fail to observe those "other days of fasting on which the Church requires such a measure of abstinence as is more especially suited to extraordinary acts and exercises of devotion"—the forty days of Lent, the Ember Days, the Rogation Days, and all the Fridays of the year, except Christmas Day.

The Church does not set forth a minute directory as to the observance of these days. It does not publish a list of forbidden foods. It would do no good. It might do harm. It would be possible to conform to the letter of such directions and yet miss altogether the spirit and purpose of these days. It would be of no avail to observe them only in a formal, perfunctory way. To do that might make us mere formalists, but it would not make us better men or better Christians.

Let us then pass these Lenten days not only in outward conformity to churchly appointment, but "as unto the Lord and not unto men." Not many in these days are "in fastings often"; certainly not too often. It is a luxurious age. The "simple life" is commended but little lived. For a large and ever-increasing class overindulgence is a

constant danger, hurtful to soul and body. Everywhere physicians might tell of evil effects of high living, of overindulgence in eating and drinking. From one end of the land to the other it helps to fill the health resorts and sanitariums with their unhappy inmates, and the benefits received come chiefly from a persistent course in physical culture and plain living. Physicians tell us that the chief difficulty in helping their patients is in inducing them to a temperate and regular way of living. It is certainly a difficulty of those who have the cure of souls. Their constant concern is to induce those committed to them to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

But no matter how faithful the preaching and teaching of Christ's minister may be, it will avail nothing to those who have no desire to do God's will. For them these Lenten days have no attraction. But the time will be welcome, and more than welcome, to those who do want to know and do the will of God. It is a time to renew the good fight of faith; to put aside even allowable pleasures, and reduce life to its simplest terms, in order to a better service of God and man. At no time will a faithful fol-

lower of Christ allow himself or herself in known sin. But poor human nature is weak and often wicked. It is easy to fall into a negligence that often, alas, ends in spiritual death. We are so likely to defer known duties and neglect precious privileges, that the Church has, from the first, found it necessary to appoint special times for self-examination, fasting, and prayer. To pay no heed to these is not only disloyalty to acknowledged authority, but sinful neglect of appointed means of grace. To suppose that, whatever they may be to others, we have no need to observe them, is spiritual blindness.

"Forty days and forty nights
Thou wast fasting in the wild:
Forty days and forty nights
Tempted, and yet undefiled.

"Sunbeams scorching all the day
Chilly dewdrops nightly shed;
Prowling beasts about Thy way;
Stones Thy pillow; earth Thy bed.

"Shall not we Thy sorrows share,
And from earthly joys abstain,
Fasting still with instant prayer,
Glad with Thee to suffer pain?"

"THE CHRISTIAN USE OF FOOD."

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.—1 *Cor.* 10 : 31.

In a lecture by Dr. Vaughn on the Christian use of food, he gives advice which is so good in itself and so suited to the season, that we will do well in heeding some of his suggestions. And first of all that we should guard against mere self-indulgence.

Few of us, doubtless, would be willing to accuse ourselves of excess. It is a reproach to any man to be called intemperate or gluttonous. Would it were not a reproach only, but a calumny, to whomsoever applied! How many of the miseries of human life are the direct result of an immoderate, or an unmoderated, appetite for food or drink! Well may an apostle, writing to a Christian church, set this among its chief dangers, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess;" place "revellings" among the manifest "works of the flesh"; crown the "fruits of the Spirit" with "temperance"; and say, "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."

But moderation goes beyond intemperance. It is seen, or else missed, at a plain or even a frugal table. It needs not for its exercise, a festive entertainment, or the company of a guest. Three times every day it is present or else absent, in the dwellings of a humble competence, no less than in the palaces of extravagant wealth. It is a moderation of quantity. There is a point at which appetite is appeased, and beyond which consequently food becomes not a necessity but an indulgence. But how few stop at this point, exercising an absolute self-control over the needless fancies of the body. Again: there is a moderation of quality; there is that on the table, which we like; there is that also which is at once more wholesome and less palatable. True, the indulgence of taste is not necessarily wrong, but it is that wherein we will do well to say with St. Paul, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any," and so, I will say, "this I prefer, and that therefore will I take."

Again: there are special reasons such as this, when moderation should be not habitual only, but special. The days of Lent are of those "on which the Church requires such a measure of abstinence as is more especially suited to extraordinary acts and exercises of

devotion," and not to "hear the Church" in a matter so suited to her care of our souls, would be to make one's self "as a heathen man and a publican."

Our blessed Lord gives us direction as to how we should fast, as if taking it for granted that we will fast. For some, and indeed many, literal fasting is well-nigh impossible, and a fasting that would injure his health or unfit him for his daily duties is neither required of any man nor would it be commendable in any. The individual man is the judge, and the sole judge herein, as to his personal duty, and yet an abstinence of some sort is the duty of us all. A fasting which consists of a temperance both of quality and of quantity, can do no one harm in body and cannot but do us good spiritually when done as unto the Lord and not unto men. I speak not of that spurious abstinence, which gives up animal food, but seeks other dainty fare which is more palatable and less wholesome;—careless of how much trouble it may make for others, or of what comment it may cause. Of such fasting, if fasting it can be called, it is enough to say that it has the promise neither of this life nor of that which is to come.

"Thou (says our Lord), when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that

thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

"Shall not we Thy sorrow share,
And from earthly joys abstain,
Fasting with unceasing prayer,
Glad with Thee to suffer pain?

"So shall we have peace divine,
Holier gladness ours shall be;
Round us, too, shall angels shine,
Such as ministered to Thee."

THE FORESHADOWING DAYS.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.—1 *Cor.* 9: 24–27.

THE Christian Year may be thought of as symbolic of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;—Christmas, with its undimmed light and joy, as typical of the happy, holy days of infancy; the calm, succeeding Epiphany weeks as symbolic of untried, ever-hopeful youth, with the dawning days still radiant with hope and strength, and the joy of life. But then other days soon follow fast,—Septuagesima, Sexigesima, Quinquagesima,—days prophetic of the battle of life, and preparatory for its coming conflict. And then we pass from the shadow into the shades of Lent. Its forty days stand for the conflicts of the soul, its temptations, its

testing, the enemy met in hand-to-hand struggle and fought with unto victory or death. Finally the calm silence of Easter-even, intervening between the gloom of Good Friday and the glory of Easter, is symbolic of the peace of Paradise, "the rest that remaineth to the people of God."

Yes, the Christian Year tells of the needful training and discipline of souls in the life which now is, for that which is to come.

By the merciful ordering of an all-wise Providence our first days, happy, sheltered, guarded, free from care, toil or conflict, have the light and joy of the morning. We are not rudely thrust into the coming conflict. In the preparatory days we are given time to grow in grace, and gather strength for the future. The time of temptation is at hand, and it, too, is needful in the testing and discipline of our soul's life.

Not a few nowadays are ready enough to keep Christmas and Easter in their way, though they think nothing of the preparatory days, of Septuagesima, Sexagesima, Quinquagesima, Lent and Holy Week.

It may seem to some that there could be nothing better than thus always to walk in the joyous days, with an undimmed radiance gilding all their way. But that cannot be.

No: nor would it be well that it should be so. It is well for us that we do not have the ordering of our lives.

A modern infidel orator used to delight in telling men how much better a world he could have made. He would have ordered life without disease, death or danger, but of indestructible health and physical satisfaction. It was the vain conceit of a man who had no sort of apprehension of the purpose of this life as a necessary school-time for a glorious eternity. Alas, that we so often forget it. And so we need to be gently led on from the joy of Christmas into the calm radiance of the Epiphany weeks, and from thence into the shadow of Lent that tells of the race that we must run if we would win the prize, and of the stern battle of life that should be fought under the banner of Christ, the Great Captain of our Salvation, that through Him we, too, may be victors on life's battle-field, and, having fought the good fight, live forever and ever in the light of our glorified Lord. Be thankful therefore for these Lenten days. Not only do they tell of effort and struggle, of temptation, of testing, and so of trial, but of a blessed possibility, a glorious destiny, an endless joy, the peace of God—forever and ever.

" Judge and Saviour of our race,
Grant us, when we see Thy face,
With Thy ransomed ones a place.

" On Thy love we rest alone,
And that love shall then be known
By the pardoned, round Thy throne."

GOING INTO THE SANCTUARY.

Then thought I to understand this: but it was too hard for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God.—*Psalm* 73: 15, 16.

You may not, during Lent, be able to be at the appointed services of your parish church as often as you would wish, but bear in mind that there are other opportunities for spiritual refreshment. Thus; no doubt you often pass some open church, where you might stop for a few moments' meditation and prayer.

Some time thus stay your steps awhile to be alone with God in the solemn silence of the sanctuary. Then and there try to think of things as they are, as you suppose they will seem to you in the light of God, and of that near-coming time when you will go hence, and be no more seen here among men. Then, as in the presence of God, try to think of what you are, and of what you know you should be; of what you have done, and of what you have left undone; of a fidelity that might have characterized you; of an example you might have shown; of good deeds you might

have wrought; of kindnesses you might have shown; of a grace that might have been yours; of opportunities neglected, and so, of work that now, alas, must remain undone.

Then judge yourself and God will not judge you. Condemn yourself, and He will not condemn you, but rather help you to a repentance that needeth not to be repented of, and you will find that you can turn back to "the trivial round, the common task,"

> "Strong in the strength which God supplies,
> Through His eternal Son."

It is in the sanctuary of the Divine presence that we will find relief from the perplexities that so often depress us. It was so in the case of the psalmist. He said, "My feet were almost gone; my treadings had well-nigh slipped." Intellectual difficulties troubled him as they do us. He could not see why the ungodly "should prosper in the world, and have riches in possession"; and was tempted to say, "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. Then thought I to understand this, but it was too hard for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God: then understood I the end of these men." There, with God, he came to see something else; came to see himself, and said, "So

foolish was I, and ignorant." Then seeing himself in the light of the Divine presence, the fulness of faith came back to him, and he burst out into a glowing confession of confidence in the loving-kindness of the Lord, saying, "I am always by Thee ; for Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after that receive me with glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." Nor will it be otherwise with us, if trying to heed now the Lenten call, we often retire into the sanctuary of the Divine presence to see things as they are in God's sight. It will surely help us to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Therefore looking up to God, our Father, we can the better say,

"Lead Thou me on !
Keep Thou my feet !
So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still,
Will lead me on."

A CALL TO COURAGE.

The Lord is my light and my salvation : whom then shall I fear : the Lord is the strength of my life : of whom then shall I be afraid ?—*Psalm* 27 : 1.

WHAT a splendid courage characterized those saints of old time. Nor should it be otherwise with us. It would be so if we had any adequate appreciation of the possibilities that Christ our Lord has opened up to us. All that God has to give has been placed within the reach of a living faith.

As St. Paul said to his Corinthian converts, "All things are yours:" and so it is. Why not? "Ye are Christ's: and Christ is God's." "The Lord knoweth them that are His." The promise is, "They shall not be confounded in the perilous time, and in the days of dearth they shall have enough." Know that, "The salvation of the righteous cometh of the Lord, who is also their strength in time of trouble." "The Lord shall stand by them, and save them, because they put their trust in Him." Be this then thy confidence. Learn to say with the boy-champion of Israel, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver

me out of the hand of this Philistine." Recall the time past, and see that it has been so. "Remember all the way which the Lord thy God has led thee, these forty years in the wilderness." Did He not direct and guide you in the way you went? And how often, too, it was in a way that you knew not. How little, after all, did you choose the way in which you went. How little did things turn out as your youthful imagination pictured, and yet the Lord led you, many a time delivering you "out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear."

You were perplexed, at your wit's end, but He brought it to pass, and ordered your going in the way. And as it *has* been, so it *will* be. To all that are His the promise is, "The Lord shall stand by them and save them, because they put their trust in Him." The Lord who *has* helped, *will* help. Will you doubt His love or deny His power? Has not God's fatherly hand been over you, and His Holy Spirit with you? Know that all His promises, He for His part, will most surely keep and perform. If faithful for your part, know "that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until (up to) the day of Christ." Be it your part then to say with the psalmist, "The Lord is my light, and my salva-

tion: whom then shall I fear: the Lord is the strength of my life: of whom then shall I be afraid?"

If those of old time could show such courage, how much more a Christian can. We have a hundredfold greater knowledge, and better blessings. We know God as Jesus Christ made Him manifest to men; know Him as our Father; know that He has for us a father's care, consideration, and loving provision. In His omniscience He has ordered our way. In His omnipotent hand we have been holden up ever since we were born, and He will be our guide unto death: yes, and through death unto never-ending life, in the many mansions of the Father's house, in which, our Saviour said, He is preparing a place for us. He said, "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." He wants us to overcome it, too, and we can in the power of His might. He wants us to be brave, and of a good courage. Let us be wholly of His mind concerning us: for that is salvation. That will give "peace and joy in believing," the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

"He leadeth me! oh, blessed thought!
Oh, words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

"Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine,
Nor ever murmur nor repine:
Content, whatever lot I see,
Since 'tis my God that leadeth me.

"And when my task on earth is done,
When, by Thy grace, the victory's won,
E'en death's cold wave I will not flee,
Since God through Jordan leadeth me."

AN EMBER-DAY READING.

Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as ye also do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which are over you in the Lord, and admonish you: and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.—2 *Thess.* 5 : 11–13.

THE observance of the fasts of the four seasons is traced back to the Jewish Church, which had its fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months, that every season of the year might begin with prayer and fasting, "in order to a blessing upon that which is sown in spring, grows in summer, is reaped in autumn, and enjoyed in winter."

In the Christian Church these fasts of the four seasons have been especially associated with ordination, and observed with prayer and fasting, and more particularly, that God may "so guide and govern the minds of His servants, the bishops and pastors of His flock, that they may lay hands suddenly on no man, but faithfully and wisely make choice of fit persons, to serve in the sacred ministry of His Church:" and further that "to those who shall be ordained to any holy function, may be

given grace, and heavenly benediction, that both by their life and doctrine they may show forth His glory and set forward the salvation of all men."

This prayer for the Ember Days is an abiding witness of the interest which the whole body of the Church has in the ordination of those appointed to any holy function. Nor should our people be content to pray only for those who are to be ordained, but as well for those who have been ordained, and, as St. Paul said, "are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." So not only did he direct that supplication be made for all saints, but said, significantly, "and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds, that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

Those that pray for their pastors are those that help them, and are helped by them. The faultfinders and hinderers are not found among those that pray for those "that are over them in the Lord." It is a very significant thing that the apostle prayed to be delivered from "*unreasonable, and wicked* men," and that he mentioned the *unreasonable* first of all as if intimating that they gave him more trouble

than any one else. It is so still. The wicked go their way, but the unreasonable we have always with us, and so have cause, as had St. Paul, to pray to be delivered from "unreasonable and wicked men." Alas, we are all so far from what we might be, and ought to be, that we should pray not only for ourselves and for all men, but, for their work's sake and for Christ's sake, especially for those who serve in the sacred ministry of His Church.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at Thy first coming didst send Thy messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee; grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at Thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in Thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit ever, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. —*Eccl.* 11 : 9.

So said Solomon—Solomon the great, the wise, the magnificent. He had drunk to the full of all the "pleasures" that the world could give and at the last, in his old age, he could find no pleasure in them. Sated, worn, weary, he said: "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity."

Very likely he was thinking of the Solomon that then was and the Solomon that might have been, recalling his superb gifts, his magnificent opportunities. Perhaps he had been thinking of the time when as a boy he ascended the throne of David; of the time when God appeared to him in a dream by night, saying, "Ask what shall I give thee." Who ever had such an offer? And yet, with all the world to choose from, the young Solomon said: "Give Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad."

Well would it have been for him had he remained of that mind. But even Solomon was not always wise. With luxury came temptation. With success came sin. With sin came sorrow. In the end came weariness and a dreary gift of years when he could only say, "I have no pleasure in them."

Looking from his roof garden wall, he saw the young men go trooping by, and, thinking of the time when he, too, was young and full of the joy of life, he said: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

God had brought Solomon into judgment. In his old age he was paying the penalty that always comes soon or late. The sins of his youth, of middle age, of old age, had found him out at the last. As it was with him it would be with all that walk in wicked ways. What wonder that he said: "Know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

So said Solomon. He found it to be so in the days of his sin-darkened old age. Yes, for wasted opportunities and sinful self-indulgence God was bringing him into judgment. All lit-

erature is full of such confessions. On his thirty-third birthday—a time when a man should be at his best, the very age when the Redeemer gave His life for us all—Lord Byron said:

> Through life's dull road, so dim and dirty,
> I have dragged on to three-and-thirty,
> And what have these years left to me?
> Nothing, except thirty-and-three.

He had sown to the wind. He was reaping the whirlwind. What wonder that still later in his short life he should say:

> My days are in the yellow leaf,
> The flower, the fruits of love are gone,
> The worm, the canker and the grief
> Are mine alone.

Ah, how many have, when it was too late, vainly regretted the sins of their youth? Hartley Coleridge was the gifted son of a gifted father. He was young, brilliant, highly educated, with every prospect for a great future, but he wasted his opportunities and little by little became a slave to strong drink. While yet young he wrote on the fly-leaf of his Bible, his dead mother's gift:

> When I received this volume small
> My years were barely seventeen,
> When it was hoped I should be all

Which once, alas ! I might have been.
And now my years are twenty-five,
And every mother hopes her lamb
And every happy boy alive
May never be what now I am.

Let us think, however, of the injunction of the text as an incentive to noble purpose and high hopes.

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth." You may. You should. Know that in doing it you have the sympathetic interest of all good men and good angels; yes, and of your Lord and Saviour Christ, who said: "I am come that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly." He would not rob you of any real true joy in life. Rather He would add to every pure pleasure the crowning joy of all—the knowledge of God and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

Cultivate then the habit of moral thoughtfulness. To many a young man it has been as a guardian angel in time of temptation. Without it he will be sure to wander into the by-paths of secret sin, or into the open places of the world's shame, blinded to the light of God, and hardened against the monitions of the Holy Spirit.

Every young man of healthy moral susceptibility will find need of resolute exertion in try-

ing to worthily shape his course in life. He will find that the everlasting issues are not to be left to mere chance, or stray thoughts, or occasional efforts. The solemn fact should come home to him that moral freedom is one of the most awful gifts of God to man. When once he comes to see that, he must often say within himself, "My life will take color and character from what I am now in the days of my youth, and, so, by God's help, I will try to live a clean, true life, with nothing to cover or conceal from the gaze of God or man. I can afford to lose much that men hold dear, but there is one thing that, God being my helper, I will not part with, and that is my honor, and my self-respect.

"Whatever comes I will rejoice in that now in the days of my youth, and look forward to the future with manly purpose and a good courage."

"Draw, Holy Ghost, Thy sevenfold veil
Between us and the fires of youth;
Breathe, Holy Ghost, Thy freshening gale
Our fevered brow in age to soothe.

"Forever on our souls be traced
This blessing from the Saviour's hand,
A sheltering rock in memory's waste,
O'ershadowing all the weary land."

THE REVELATION OF THE UNSEEN.

And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.—2 *Kings* 6: 15–17.

In commenting upon these events in the life of Elisha, an excellent expositor (the late Dr. Vaughn, of Doncaster) has said:

"In his case those agencies belonged to what we commonly call Providence. That is, they were concerned about the safety of one of God's servants; they protected Elisha from danger; they made him secure amidst a thousand enemies; they made him calm for suffering and brave for action, as knowing himself 'immortal till his work was done.' Was it only of Elisha that these things were written? was it only for Elisha that these things were done? Surely we have here the very same revelation of the care of God for His people, which is expressed also, in general, in the

thirty-fourth Psalm, 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.' Oh, if our eyes were opened, like those of this young man, what a scene would be discovered in this one aspect! We go about our daily work, ply head and hand, journey hither and thither, reënter securely at evening the home from which we started securely in the morning—and in all this, take for granted the continuance of life and health, of sight and hearing, of reason and memory, without one thought of the thousand risks amidst which we live and move and have our being. If we could see the spiritual world as we see the natural, we should find that every life is lived in God's hand, every faculty kept for us by God's keeping, every step taken, every word spoken, and every work done, in virtue of a power not our own, which both enables and guards, communicates the needful gift, and also watches over it with an unsleeping eye. This is the revelation of God's providence. This is that world, not of sense but of spirit, which the eye divinely opened discerns, and the heart divinely touched rests in and gives thanks for.

"And, if the mountain of our earthly abode is thus full of horses and chariots and fire protecting the godly, what must it be for those to

live upon it who account God their enemy, and strive to shut out, while they can, the torment of His recollection? We are never alone: the little accidents of space and matter limit not nor modify the reality of the Divine presence: and He who watches over our steps, and keeps us in being, and thus gives time for repentance if haply we will at last turn to Him, must also exercise over us the discernment of His omniscience, and record against us every act of disobedience by which we are treasuring up unto ourselves wrath against the revelations of His righteous judgment.

"And yet let us not so speak as if God were an Observer only, and not chiefly and above all the Friend of man. It is not to turn us from Him, but to draw us towards Him, that He reveals to us that invisible world which skirts so closely on all sides the region of the visible. I know that there are those amongst us who hunger and thirst for the revelation of the unseen; who would give all that earth possesses for them, whether of hope or enjoyment, for one resistless proof of God's care for them and God's presence; one sure and unchanging insight into that mysterious reality which the Bible and the Gospel tell of, the love of a Father and a Saviour and a Comforter, ever-present, all-powerful, long-suffer-

ing, and eternal. Be assured then that that presence, that care, that love, is yours, whosoever you be, that will long for it, and search after it, and wait patiently and not faint. There is One nearer to you than the nearest earthly heart to your own, who is the unchangeable, the all-merciful, the Omnipotent God. If you cannot see Him, yet believe: if you cannot understand the secret of being, your own or His, yet receive it as a secret, and use it, and live by it: if you cannot cast out the fear, or cannot quicken the dulness, or cannot illuminate the darkness, which clings to you by nature and by the fall, yet look into the impenetrable gloom, and act as if you saw there the object of your hope and of your trust; yea, stretch out towards Him the hand of your soul, and pray Him to guide you, unseen, into the haven of His presence and of His love. When you have learned to do that, there will arise for you, by little and little, a light in the darkness: the eye, accustomed to long gazing, shall not gaze forever in vain: thine eye shall see the King in His beauty, and behold at last the land which is very far off."

"Thrice blest is he to whom is given
The instinct that can tell
That God is on the field when He
Is most invisible."

"YE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST."

Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. —1 *Cor.* 12:27.

"THE word was made flesh, and dwelt among us": and, so, when visibly here among men, He had a body, His own human body; had feet on which "He went about doing good"; hands, to touch and heal; arms, in which He enfolded the little children that were brought unto Him; a voice, telling of peace to men of good will; eyes, through which the Infinite, the Eternal, looked into the eyes of the children of men. When here in the flesh He had a body, a body in which He made God manifest to men. And, now, that in that very body, risen, changed, glorified, He has ascended into heaven, He still needs a body here on the earth through which He may be made manifest to men. And He has such a body. It is His mystical body, the Church.

So to the Christians of his day St. Paul said, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." In other words Christians are the means of His making Himself manifest to

men. He dwelleth in you, O Christian, and shall be in you, as He said. In you He would still go about doing good as He did of old in Galilee and the Holy Land. He would look through your eyes, serve by your hands, and bless by your voice: be "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Ah, if we would really see what this should mean for us, it would change, and really revolutionize our relations to our fellow men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Possibly you have sometimes said to yourself, "O if I could have seen His face; if I could have heard His voice; if I could have comforted His soul; if I could have sympathized with His sorrows, and rejoiced in His joy!" Well, if we want to, really want to, thank God, we can do all this.

Said He not, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me"?

Would that we might see, and see more and more, what the apostle meant in saying, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." What a blessed change it would work in us; what a putting away of misunderstandings, suspicions, alienations; what a putting on of Christ, and that not in word and in profession only, but in very deed and in

truth. And it might be so. Yes, it would be so if only we would let God come into our hearts and minds in the plentitude of His saving grace. If we really are members of Christ we must in some real way have that mind which was in Him. "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

But what is the true function of a living member of a living body? It is to do the bidding of the head of the body. Your feet are members of your body. By your feet you go hither and thither. They do your bidding. Your hands are members of your body. By them you reach out to this or that: and in like manner every living member of your body serves you, and every other member of the body. What you do, you do by and through some living member in particular of the one body. But with the paralyzed or dead member you can do nothing. It is no help. It is a hindrance, a worse than worthless thing. Nor is it otherwise in the Church which is the body of Christ. The living member of Christ must, simply *must*, be a recipient of the life and power of Christ, the grace which flows from the Head down, into every living member of His body. And, so, the living member of Christ will serve Him: must serve Him. It cannot be otherwise. The dead

branch of the tree has really no part in its life. Its final fate is to be broken off, or to fall of its own frailty. Nor is it otherwise in the case of the dead member of the Church. It is only by the living members of His body that the living Lord can reach out to help and to bless. Under God, it is only by its living members that the Church, which is His body, can be extended among men. Remember this, and that "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

"If I have turned away,
From grief or suffering which I might relieve,
Careless the cup of water e'en to give,
Forgive me Lord I pray,
And teach me how to feel
My sinful wanderings with a deeper smart;
And more of mercy and of grace impart,
My sinfulness to heal."

"WITHOUT WHICH."

And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it : for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.—*Rev.* 21 : 22–27.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.—*Heb.* 12 : 14.

In one of his great sermons a great preacher (John Henry Newman) tries to tell men why it is that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord": and substantially in this way. Some one may say, "Why is holiness necessary for future blessedness?" We have no right to ask the question, and yet, as it may be asked reverently, we proceed to state one of the reasons why holiness is necessary to future happiness. Supposing a man of unholy life were suffered to enter heaven, he would not be happy there.

We are apt to deceive ourselves, and to consider heaven a place like this earth, where every one may choose, and take his own

pleasure. We see that in this world, active men have their enjoyments, and domestic men have theirs: men of literature, of science, of political talent, have their respective pursuits and pleasures. Hence we are led to act as if it will be the same in another world. The only difference we put between this world and the next, is that *here* men are *not always sure*, but *there*, we suppose they *will be always sure*, of obtaining what they seek after. And accordingly we conclude that *any man*, whatever his habits, tastes, or manner of life, if *once admitted* into heaven, would be happy there. Not that we altogether deny that some preparation may be necessary for the next world, but that we do not estimate its real extent or importance. Many seem to think they can reconcile themselves to God when they will: as if nothing was required of men in general, but some temporary attention, more than ordinary, to religious duties,—some strictness during their last sickness to the services of the Church, as men of business arrange their letters and papers on taking a journey or balancing an account.

But an opinion like this, though commonly acted on, is refuted as soon as put into words. For heaven, it is plain from Scripture, is not a place where many discordant pursuits can

be carried on at once, as is the case in this world. Here every man can do his own pleasure, but there he must do God's pleasure. So far as we are distinctly told, that future life will be spent in God's presence, in a sense which does not apply to our present life: so that it may be best described as an endless worship of the Eternal Father, Son, and Spirit. "They serve Him day and night in His temple." Heaven, then, is not like this world: I will say it is much like—*a church*. . . . Supposing, then, instead of its being said that no irreligious man could serve and love God in heaven, we are told that no irreligious man could worship, or spiritually see Him in church, should we not at once perceive the meaning of the doctrine, namely, that were a man to come hither, who had suffered his mind to grow up in its own way, as nature or chance determined, without any deliberate habitual effort after purity and truth, he would find no real pleasure here, but would soon weary of the place, because in this house of God, he would hear only of that one subject which he cared little or nothing about, and nothing at all of those things which excited his hopes and fears, his sympathies and energies. If then, supposing it were possible, a man without religion were admitted into

heaven, doubtless he would sustain a great disappointment. He would find no discourse but that which he had shunned on earth, no pursuits but those he had disliked or despised, nothing which bound him to aught *else* in the universe, and made him feel at home, nothing he could enter into and rest upon. He would perceive himself to be an isolated being, cut away by Supreme Power from all those objects which were still entwined around his heart. Nay, he would be in the presence of that Supreme Power, whom he never on earth could bring himself steadily to think upon, and whom now he regarded as the destroyer of all that was precious and dear to him. Ah! he could not bear the face of the living God, the Holy God would be no object of joy to him: and, at last, he would come to know that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." How forlorn would he wander through the courts of heaven. He would find no one like himself. He would see in every direction the marks of God's holiness, and these would make him shudder. He would know that the Eternal Eye was ever on him, and that Eye of holiness, which is joy and life to the holy, would seem to him an eye of wrath; and he would fain flee from such a place. Yes, strange as it may seem to say

it, doubtless, even heaven would be hell to the unholy, for —

"There no shadows come between the soul
And that consuming holiness of God.
There, face to face, we stand before the Light
That lighteth all men, and its glorious rays,
The joy and bliss of all who love the Truth,
Become, for those who hate the Eternal Fire:
And Memory dwells not there on former years,
As now, with pleasant thoughts of pleasant sins,
But preying on the spirit evermore
Lives on and on, the worm that dieth not."

WHEAT OR TARES?

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.—*St. Matt.* 13 : 30.

In this world of mingled good and ill, the tares and the wheat will grow together. It has been so. It is so. It will be so "until the harvest." Then the Infallible Judge will infallibly direct the work of final separation.

We hope that then we will be of the wheat, gathered into the everlasting garner of our God. But on what ground does our hope rest? Are we awake or asleep to the possibilities and privileges that are, or, at least, might be ours in Christ our Lord? How significantly did the Saviour say, "While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat."

It is always so when we are asleep to the duties and obligations of a godly and a Christian life. Then will the enemy surely sow tares in the soil of the soul. What tares? Tares of all sorts. The supposition that for the present it cannot matter much; that for the present we have sufficient excuse for the

neglect of known duty ; that it will not always be so ; that there will be "a more convenient season" ; that though negligent now there will be more favorable opportunities, and that though neglectful now, some day we will more seriously think of what we might be and do. Now that is the very state of mind that our Lord warns us against in the parable. He says, "While men slept his enemy came and sowed tares."

Nor need we be at a loss to know whether we are of those that sleep.

Sleep is a state of obliviousness to the stern realities of life. It is a state of unconsciousness, of inaction. It is often, too, a time of dreams, of hallucinations, and vain imaginations, when we do not see things as they are but in all sorts of strange relations and grotesque combinations. "While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares."

Now a well-spent Lent will help us to know how it is with us: whether we are alive unto God, and what He has to give us, or whether we are of them that sleep.

Should any say, "How can we surely know?" the answer may be found in asking, What is God to us? Do we really care for Him? Do we prize His presence? Do we turn to *Him* in our difficulties? Do we find comfort in

knowing that He is with us? Do we ask Him to bless us in our enjoyments, as well as sympathize with us in our sorrows?

The Christian who can call God his Father, and really mean it, is one who is not asleep, but alive unto God, and to what God is to him. Such a one can say, "He is at my right hand: I shall not be moved." "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear: the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?"

"All the world is God's own field,
Fruit unto His praise to yield;
Wheat and tares together sown,
Unto joy or sorrow grown:
First the blade, and then the ear,
Then the full corn shall appear:
Grant, O harvest Lord, that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be."

TO EVERY MAN A PENNY.

They received every man a penny.—*St. Matt.* 20 : 9.

THE householder is represented in the parable as giving to every man a penny. It was the reward of those that had "wrought but one hour" as well as of those that had "borne the burden and heat of the day." And so the unwarrantable inference is sometimes made that there will be no difference of condition or degree in the life of the world to come; that all there will be on the same plane and level, and heaven no more to a St. Peter or a St. Paul than to any one else. The inference is unwarrantable, not only contrary to what reason would lead us to expect, but to the plain teaching of holy Scripture.

Our Lord says, "In My Father's house are many mansions" (abiding-places) and an apostle says that "each shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor"; and again, "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead."

Even though God's gifts be the same, they will, nevertheless, be to each one of us what we may make them. This world has for ages been substantially what it is now, and yet what a different world it has been to the different nations and generations.

Though in itself the same the world is one thing to one man and quite another thing to another. And, no doubt, it will still be so even when we have passed on into the Great Beyond. In Himself God is the same, always, and yet how different He seems to men. In Himself Jesus Christ is "The same, yesterday, to-day and forever," but to one man He seems only as a man who lived and died long ago, while to us He is the living Lord unto whom "all power is given in heaven and earth." The Scriptures, the sacraments, all appointed means of grace, are in themselves the same, but to each one of us what we choose to make them. These Lenten days are in themselves always the same, rich in blessing, but to many they are no more than any other days, while to us, if we will to have it so, every one of these forty days may be made a means of growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. If we keep Lent as unto the Lord we will win from it a lasting blessing, for there is no blessing better

worth having than the mastery of self and of sin, which is the blessing we seek in a right use of Lent.

"Lord in this Thy mercy's day,
Ere the time shall pass away,
On our knees we fall and pray.

"Lord, on us Thy Spirit pour,
Kneeling lowly at Thy door,
Ere it close forevermore."

THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

The Lord ordereth a good man's going, and maketh his way acceptable to Himself.—*Psalm* 37 : 23.

SEIZED with a mortal illness a great American soldier passed his last days in writing the two thick books of his very interesting memoirs. Knowing that his way in this world was rapidly drawing to an end, there came to him a solemn sense of God's gracious guidance, and so he began his memoirs by saying, "'Man proposes and God disposes.' There are but few important steps in the affairs of men brought about by their own choice."

God's overruling hand may seem more manifest in the case of such a man, but it is just as real in the lot of the lowly, as in the case of those that sit in the seats of the mighty. We should all rejoice in knowing that "His mercy is over all His works," and that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." His Providence is for all men, and rules all men, and provides for all men, and blesses all men in proportion as they are willing to be blessed. If His love is perfected in us—says Bishop Thorold—then indeed

are we safe and happy; if it is only on His side towards us, and not on ours towards Him, then though His sun equally shines, His rain equally descends on us, in the higher purpose of His mercy He waits to be gracious; standing at the door of our heart and knocking, He remains outside till we let Him in. There are many ways, were they needed, of proving this Providence of His universal love. We who love Him now can perhaps recall the time when we did not love Him, did not even wish to please Him. Yet did He not watch over us then, biding His opportunity? Did our coldness quench the flame of His love, did our turning away make Him less mighty to save? We love Him, because He first loved us. This is indeed the account that every soul conscious of its acceptance gives to itself of its salvation. But what has been true of us is true of others. God gave His Son to redeem the world, because He loved the world, and whom He loves He would save. Let us then thankfully recognize a Divine Providence not only watching over us but over all men, if by all means He may save some; and let this be the ground of our confidence, the strength of our hope, the power of our prayers, for those dear to us, who are as yet living as if without God in the world. We should not cease to hope for them.

God's Providence has not yet been fulfilled in them. He bears with them still. He loves them still for all their wilfulness and waywardness. In ways we wot not of He often brings the wanderer back. It may be, and often is, by a stern hard discipline. His hand is over them still, and while we follow them with our prayers, we must leave them to Him, who can do, and is doing for them all He can. Yes, He is doing for them, and for us, all He can. He does not force His way into their hearts, or ours. He waits for an opening door, and often long stands waiting, but ever ready to come in with blessing to such as will to receive it. Now as of old, to as many as receive Him, gives He power to become the Sons of God, not in possibility only, but in very deed and truth. He cannot help those who do not will to be helped, but He is always helping the helpable, and blessing the blessable, and saving the savable. So we have right to say with Him who said —

"I say to thee, do thou repeat
To the first man thou mayest meet,
In lane, highway, or open street;
That he, and we, and all men move
Under a canopy of love,
As broad as the blue sky above."

THE BEST AMBITION.

He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith.—*Acts* 11 : 24.

THIS was said of St. Barnabas. It is the record of a good man's life. To be good and to do good, that by God's grace is in the power of us all. And what better ambition could characterize us? To be good; to be guided by the Spirit; to walk by faith and not by sight—this is to be in the way of helpfulness, of hope and comfort to those around us. It is to put on Christ, not in word and profession only, but in very deed and truth. It is to be made like unto Him whose life among men was summed in saying, "He went about doing good." It should be the purpose of us all, and it might be. There is much that we cannot be. It is the lot of few, very few, to be numbered with the gifted or the great among men, but it is in the power of us all to be good, and if we are good we will surely "go about doing good." And how much more it is to be good than merely to be great, or to seem great. Tennyson often wrote in a loftier, but seldom in a wiser way, than when he said:

"Howe'er it be, it seems to me
'Tis only noble to be good,
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

What the world counts greatness comes to few, very few, and, too, often by the mere accident of birth, or of unusual opportunity more than by extraordinary merit. God seems to need the good much more than the great. In fact to Him the good are the great, and by His help, to be good is a possibility to every one.

It is God's will concerning us: and what He wills, He will effect in us if we will let Him. If we freely will for ourselves that which He wills for us, then the grace that He is waiting to give, will have free course in us, enabling us to be that which of ourselves we could not be. No good thing will He withhold from them that live a godly life. Aye more, there is nothing good for us that He is not even now giving us if we will to receive it of Him. He does not force on us His gifts. The soul that does not will to have them cannot receive them. The Gospel message is to whosoever willeth to profit thereby. As the Psalmist said, "My soul is always in my hand": in my hand to give to God—or, in my hand to shut out from blessing. It is as we will. God does

not force His grace on the unwilling soul, but He ever waits and longs for place in us. The ever-patient Saviour says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

Yes, Christ in us wills to do still among men what He did of old in Galilee; would fain still "go about doing good," and in us and through us, bring blessing to those around us.

To serve them is to serve Him: and to Him, to serve is to be great. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister: and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

To Him service is the measure of greatness. It is to be great not in mere state, or circumstance, or in that which is exterior to us, but in our inmost selves, in our own soul's life. So He said, "Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister."

And what ample opportunity we have to serve. The poor we have always with us, not only the poor in purse, but the poor in spirit, those to whom in one way or another has come deprivation, pain, or loss of hope in life, and to such we might be, as was Barnabas, "a son of consolation."

In so doing we will in the day of final

destiny, inherit the promise of Him who will say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these ye have done it unto Me": "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Then for us will "the long beatitudes begin."

"Jesu, in mercy bring us
To that dear land of rest!
Who art with God the Father,
And Spirit, ever blest."

FORGET THE PAST: FACE THE FUTURE.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—*Phil.* 3 : 13–14.

THE past is. It cannot be brought back: cannot be undone. It may be a matter of great regret, and, alas, sometimes of great sorrow, but it is the past and always will be. You may call for it but it is gone; gone forever. We should see that it is so, and act accordingly. For our past mistakes we must have sincere regrets, and for our sins sorrow. But if they have caused a "repentance to salvation not to be repented of," they have been forgiven for Jesus Christ's sake. As for the past therefore we cannot do better than say as did St. Paul, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ."

Our help is in Him. Let us look to Him, and be of a good courage, believing that He

can, and will, deliver us "from the bands of those sins which by our frailty we have committed." He wants to help us, and is helping us. A sincere desire to do His will should keep us from serious sin. He came to save us from our sins; to take them away; to free us from them. A godly purpose should keep us from deadly sin, and by God's grace it will. God is for us: not against us. The infinite love, the infinite knowledge and the infinite power of God are working together for our good, always, day and night, night and day, every moment of every hour, every hour of every day. "He giveth His beloved in sleep, that is whilst they sleep." If then we are workers together with Him all will be well. We can therefore fearlessly face the future, believing that God can even turn the failures and follies of the past into a certain sort of good to us. His wisdom can overrule even our error, and of His mercy He will forgive our weakness. "If (a wise man has said) through our fault, not His, our pastures have not been as green, our waters not as still as they might have been, we may thank Him if He has made the way of our own will hard and humbling for us." To be taught to trust God, through suffering the consequences of mistrust, is a lesson worth learning, though perhaps at the price of much sorrow. Never-

theless, whatever our waywardness and wilfulness, as we look back and count up our past blessings, they may well fill our heart with thankfulness. And so, dark as the day may have been, "at evening time it shall be light." Sometimes our path in life may seem like a lane full of weary windings, where the steep banks shut out the light and air, and all we can do is to trudge steadily on through the mud and mire. But if we look high up in front of us, we shall see, as Israel saw, the faint blue hills of the Land of Promise rising up against the sky; and the path will come out at length in full view of the Celestial City: and at last we shall be at home.

"Weary deserts we may tread,
A dreary labyrinth may thread,
Through dark ways underground be led;
Yet if we will our Guide obey,
The dreariest path, the darkest way,
Shall issue out in heavenly day."

THE EMPTY HOUSE.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest: and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house from whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.—*St. Luke* 11: 24, 25, 26.

You have all noticed the difference, the striking difference, between the occupied and the empty house. The one has a look of life and thrift, and the other is a dreary soulless thing. The occupied house not only looks better but is better: whereas the unoccupied house is, just from being empty, sure to suffer for it. Nor is it otherwise in the case of the unoccupied soul. It cannot safely remain empty. If not filled with good things it will gather in evil things to its hurt, and possible ruination.

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they

enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

In these words of our blessed Lord we have, no doubt, reference to spiritual conditions which were open to Him, however obscure and strange they may seem to our sin-dimmed sight. But, making no effort to penetrate to that which is beyond us, we can, and should, find in this teaching of our Lord a meaning which we need, and greatly need, to heed. And it is that bad habits cannot be overcome by good resolutions only; that it is not enough to cast out the evil spirit: we must give room to a good spirit, and above all have place for the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, the one Source of abiding strength and grace.

It is not enough to leave the soul "swept and garnished." If left unoccupied the evil spirit will return with sevenfold strength, "and the last state of that man will be worse than the first."

The trouble with the many is not that they never want to do better and be better, but that they do not see that they need a Saviour.

They often try to amend, but only in their own strength, and finally failing, think it is of no use to try any longer. So they fall back into the bad habit with a greater abandon than ever. The evil spirit returns in sevenfold

power, and the man is worse than he was before. He wanted to be better, and for a time he was, but the place of the bad habit was not filled by a good habit. The companions that led into temptation were avoided, but their place was not taken by those who would help. The evil spirit was resisted, but the Holy Spirit was not heeded. What wonder that as he grew weary in lonely struggle the old temptation would return in a power that he could not withstand. Now suppose that instead of trying to reform in his own strength only, the man had said to himself, "How is it that I am in this evil case? How is it that I am thus tempted? How is it that, knowing what is right, I want to do what is wrong? Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Then surely he would have seen the need of a Saviour; would have seen what Christ meant in saying, "Ye must be born from above," and what His apostle meant in saying, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The great trouble with us after all is that we do not go deep enough. We do not recognize the condition we are in: for, how is it that we fall into evil ways? How comes it that we sin, and so sadly come short of being what we should be?

It is because we belong to a sinful race that

needs redemption ; salvation from sin, help from above, the imparted strength of a Lord and Master mighty to save.

" Lord, comest Thou to me ?
My heart is cold and dead :
Alas that such a heart should be
The place to lay Thy head."

THE INCONSPICUOUS SAINTS.

One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias: which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.—*St. John* 1 : 40–42.

THIS is the way in which St. Andrew made his conversion forever memorable in the Church. It is not much that we know of him, but the little that we do know is enough to keep his name in grateful and abiding remembrance. It is much, very much, that he made his conversion memorable by at once bringing others to Christ, and first of all his own brother. If Andrew himself was not to take a great, or even conspicuous place, in the history of the Church or of the world, it was his part to bring to Jesus one who did. In bringing to Christ "his own brother, Simon," he did that which alone was of inestimable worth. He is three times told of as bringing others to Jesus, and further than this we know but little of him, and of his work for God and man. But to do what Andrew did; to bring others to Christ; to set forward the Kingdom of God; to be a

blessing to those around us; to be ourselves inconspicuous while bringing others to honor and place and power; to humbly and quietly do what we can, the work God has given us, content to serve where it is appointed us, and finally disappear from the sight and knowledge of men, this may seem, and is, an inglorious lot in the eyes of the world, but it is the appointed lot of the many. And what more need we look for, if, in truth, our highest hope is to pass our appointed time here in the love of God, and then live forever and forever in the light of our glorified Lord?

"If on our daily course our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

"The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we need to ask;
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

If ever tempted to repine over our lot in life we will do well to bear in mind that "those are not necessarily the most useful in their generation, nor the most favored of God, who make the most noise in the world, and who seem to be principals in the great changes and events recorded in history. On the contrary,

even when we are able to point to a certain number of men as the real instruments of any great blessing vouchsafed to mankind, our relative estimate of them, one with another, is often very erroneous; so that, on the whole, if we would trace truly the hand of God in human affairs, and pursue His bounty as displayed in the world to its original sources, we must unlearn our admiration of the powerful and distinguished, and turn our eyes to private life, watching in all we read or witness for the true signs of God's presence, the graces of personal holiness manifested in His elect; which weak as they may seem to mankind, are mighty through God, and have an influence on the course of His Providence, and bring about events in the world at large, when the wisdom and strength of the natural man are of little or no avail.

A well-spent Lent will correct our faulty estimate of things, and give us something of that mind which was in Christ our Lord who said, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

"When God's great Angel
Cries aloud the deeds of might,
At the great day when hearts are open

In the Holy Father's sight,
Then the greatest deeds and noblest,
Will be those unheard of now,
Hidden under silent heart-beats,
And an uncomplaining brow,
Deeds of patient self-rejection,
Wrung from hearts that made no moan :
Tender hearts that like the Master's
Trod the wine-press all alone."

THE ANNUNCIATION.

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.—*St. Luke* 1 : 28.

LITTLE, very little, is told us in the Gospels, of that sweet and saintly soul who found such favor with God that it was her blessed lot to be the mother of our Lord. Her home was amidst the Galilean hills. She had, doubtless, lived all her life in Galilee, growing up, like the Annunciation lily, in the humble unobtrusiveness of perfect purity and peace.

True, the legendary story that relates the circumstances of the great announcement is not history, and yet its idyllic simplicity is so in keeping with all that is told us in the Gospels, that it would seem more than possible that something of real history has come down to us in its account of how the fact of the Incarnation was made known by the message of an angel. The legend is that it was at the fresh dawn of day that one morning the Blessed Virgin went to draw water from the fountain by the northern wall of Nazareth, and as she drew near the arch-covered fount,

the angel appeared, saying: "Hail! thou art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." And when she was troubled at his saying, "the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

The intimation was added that she should seek out her cousin Elizabeth, who also, she was assured, had found favor with God. "And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Juda, and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth."

To Elizabeth also, had been granted the dearest desire of a Jewish woman's heart, and Mary naturally turned to her for womanly sympathy and confidences that could be held with no one else in all the world.

What tender, incommunicable thoughts must have been hers as she went her way over the hill-country to her cousin's house! She had, doubtless, pondered long over the startling

nature of the angel's message, and, lo, as she entered the house of Zacharias, the assurance of the angel was promptly confirmed by the sympathetic salutation of her cousin, who was herself also wonderfully associated with the promised redemption. Elizabeth said, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Then it was that Mary's full heart found utterance in the noble words of the *Magnificat.* They witness to their authenticity, and simply from a literary standpoint the *Magnificat* is unique, unapproachable. There is nothing like it. Its delicacy, its sweetness, its loftiness is inimitable. It belongs to the highest kind of inspirational utterance and yet is not without its personal quality. Not only was it inspired by the Spirit of all Truth, but it was also a real reflection of the lofty thoughts of the Virgin. And what a revelation it is of sweetness and strength! What wonder that Elizabeth was moved to say, "Blessed art thou among women!"

There is in the *Magnificat* no trace of self-consciousness or complaisance, but because she was to be a means of blessing to all humankind well might she magnify the Lord. To be a blessing that was indeed cause for thanks-

giving. What a revelation it was of high womanhood! yes, and of sainthood also. "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Who could withhold from the Blessed Virgin her beatitude?

"Oh, not in vain we learn'd of old thy lowly strain,
Fain in thy shadow would we rest,
And kneel with thee, and call thee blest:
With thee would magnify the Lord,
And if thou art not here adored,
Yet seek we day by day, the love and fear,
Which brings thee, with all saints, near and more near."

THE BESETTING SIN.

Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.—*Heb.* 12 : 1, 2.

THE besetting sin is the sin which most closely clings to us; which entangles our feet; causes us to fall and keeps us from running "with patience the race that is set before us." It may be any one of a hundred or more sins, such as pride, vanity, self-will, avarice, laziness, bad temper, self-conceit, greed, intemperance and the like. You, yourself, should be best able to make a diagnosis of that particular disease that most endangers your soul's health; and so I beg you to try and examine yourself by the rule of God's Holy Word, and that not lightly, but soberly, and in the fear of God.

Let us not try to deceive ourselves, crying, peace, peace, where there is no peace of God, but test our manner of life by Holy Scripture, and above all by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ our Lord. And then seeing just

what our besetting sin is, let us do as we would if we knew that we had a tendency to some physical ailment that might be a menace to us, such as a predisposition to consumption, heart trouble, or other disease. If wise, we would carefully avoid everything that would be likely to develop it. We would treat promptly the first unfavorable symptoms, and try to prevent the disease from gaining any foothold or headway. If, for example, your besetting sin is an inclination to intemperance in strong drink, carefully avoid all those occasions and associations that would lead to it. Do not flatter yourself that you know how far you can go, or that you can stop indulgence in it when you have a mind to. Stop now when you can, lest there come a time when you cannot. Above all do not trust in your own unaided strength but "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Then only, can you hope to say as did St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." Nor this only, do as any wise man would who knows that he has a predisposition to some particular malady. Not only would he guard against everything that tends to its development, but above all he would try to strengthen, and build up his general health. In so doing he would make him-

self impervious to attacks which might otherwise endanger his life. So we should try to become spiritually strong by constant fidelity, and in this way become impervious to the assaults of that particular adversary that most frequently assails our soul. Consider the case of two Christians confirmed in the same class, and at the same time admitted to the Lord's table. One grows in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, and is a tower of strength in his parish, and in the community, while the other who had identically the same privileges and opportunities, finally falls away, and at last practically excommunicates himself. The one, by God's grace, walks in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless, and by continued fidelity becomes spiritually strong, while the other was careless, negligent, and more and more unfaithful. To both, as to all men, comes their time of testing, and one passes through it unscathed, while the other fails and falls, making sad, utter shipwreck of faith and hope. We need not look far for the difference in them; why one had strength to stand, and withstand in time of need, and the other so sadly sinned against God and his own soul's life? It was not from lack of privilege, opportunity or grace to be had for the seeking, but the one had a will

to be saved, and the other sinned against light, knowledge, and all the monitions and warnings of the indwelling Spirit.

Let us now, especially through Lent, when thousands and thousands of our fellow Christians are fighting the good fight of faith, with them "lay hold on eternal life." "Watch and pray," said our Lord. Let us come to Him in all the ways of His appointment, that we may be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." He said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." He wants to help us and bless us. Let us want to be helped and blest. Let us draw near to God and we will find that in us He has made good the promise, "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to thee."

"I heard the voice of Jesus say
Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast.
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad."

SINS OF OMISSION.

Inasmuch as ye did it not.—*St. Matt.* 25 : 45.

THE Church instantly reminds us that sins of omission are sins, and serious sins, which we should confess before God and man ; nor confess only, but for which we should show contrition, by repentance and amendment of life. And so we begin our public worship in the Lord's house, not only by acknowledging that we have offended against God's holy laws, but that "we have left undone those things which we ought to have done." And yet, withal, it is hard to make men think that they are as really responsible for sins of omission as for those of commission. Most men will readily enough admit that they are accountable for what they do, and that for wrong-doing they may rightly be held responsible. To say that a man is irresponsible is to intimate either that he has lost his reason, or had none to lose. No one will admit that to be his case. We admit our responsibility and insist that every one else shall admit it also. It is an admission that we are free to choose, and that we should choose that which

is right in preference to that which is wrong. Yes, men are ready enough to admit that they are responsible, but not so ready to admit the extent of their responsibility. Few seem to think themselves accountable for what they have left undone. And yet this is what we find our blessed Lord asserting over and over again.

He especially warns us against the perverse habit of excusing ourselves for the non-performance of our duty towards God. The chief purpose of the parable of the talents, is to bring vividly before us the certainty of judgment, and that not only for what we do, but for what we leave undone. The unprofitable servant is represented as judged and condemned for this very thing. He was given that to do which he left undone. It was not much. Only one talent was committed to his care, but he put it to no use. He did not throw it away. He simply kept it—unused. In the day of account he appeared with his unused talent, saying, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine": and he was *condemned* simply on the ground of not putting his one talent to any use. It was said to him not only, "Thou wicked and slothful servant," but "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness." Then our Lord pro-

ceeds to tell us that it will be sufficient cause for condemnation in that day which will not only try the sum total of this world's work, but our personal part in it. Elsewhere, over and over, judgment is proclaimed against open transgressors but the chief purpose of the parable is to show men that they will come into condemnation for the sins of omission, for having "left undone those things which we ought to have done." The rejected are represented as commenting on the grounds of their rejection, and the Judge as justifying His judgment in saying, "Inasmuch as ye did it not." The parable reminds us of a never-to-be-forgotten fact. It is that there are two sorts of sins, sins of commission and sins of omission, and correspondingly two sorts of sinners: Those of the one class positively and actively wicked, and those of the other, simply negligent of known duty and obligation. The latter may be, and often are, characterized by much that is good and agreeable. Their chief sin would often seem to be the sin of omission, but it is none the less a serious sin. It was quite enough to cause the condemnation of the unprofitable servant. And yet by many, these sins of omission hardly seem to be regarded as sins at all, and by none are they as seriously thought of as they should

be. Many seem to forget altogether that the plain injunction is of just as much importance as the plain prohibition. "Thou shalt not steal," is a very explicit command, and yet no more a command than the injunction to love God and do His holy will; to confess Christ before men, and follow Him. And yet thousands who would condemn themselves, and despise themselves, for breaking one of the ten commandments, do not seem to blame themselves at all for disobedience to these other and equally certain injunctions of God, and of their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. They seem to suppose it suffices to keep from open evil living; seem to forget that not only are we to abhor that which is evil, but to cleave to that which is good, and as much bound to do that which is enjoined, as to abstain from those things which are prohibited. Thus, we have certain plain duties towards God and towards our neighbor. Our duty towards God is to love Him, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength: and the evidence of this is that we go in the way that He has appointed for us to walk in. This, too, is the test of Christian fidelity. Christ said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Plainly then if we do love Him, we will, God helping us, do what He has told us to do: and

if we do not, it is because we do not love Him. This no Christian can deny. And yet there are thousands everywhere around us, who, though assenting to the truth of Christianity, and really wanting it to prevail among men, live on month after month, year after year, unmindful of the unmistakable injunctions of their Lord and Saviour, apparently with no concern as to their manner of life, and no apparent appreciation of the fact that we are accountable not only for what we do but for what we leave undone. Would that they might see that it is so! The effective working forces of the Church would be increased tenfold if her better sort of adherents could be brought to see that we are verily guilty for sins of omission as well as for those of commission. They are in the main, worthy men and women who want to see God's Kingdom come, and His will be done. They must sometimes think of what His Church might be, and should be, but, alas, do not seem to see what they might be and should be. They believe in God. They reverence Christ. They honor His Church, and respect His people. If not openly for Christ they would be shocked to be classed with those that are *against* Him. There is much that they refrain from doing, but almost as much which, practically, they

refuse to do. They see that even in the things of this life, neglect is irreparable, and yet somehow seem to suppose that it will not be so in that day that will declare the whole world's work and their personal part in it. In that day of destiny Christ's commendation will for us be, "Inasmuch as ye did it," or His condemnation will be, "Inasmuch as ye did it not."

"Judge and Saviour of our race,
Grant us, when we see Thy face,
With Thy ransomed ones a place."

A PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE.

Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.—*Rev.* 3 : 12.

THE promise is to him "that overcometh." Overcometh what? Overcometh what Christ overcame, the world, the flesh, and the devil; overcometh himself, and the manifold sins of his own soul. To him who in the strength of God, and the grace of His Spirit, overcometh all these, is the promise made: "Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God." The vision is that of the vast, completed, finished, spiritual temple, of which Christ is the corner-stone, and the promise is of an abiding part and place in it, "Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall no more go out." Dwelling on this great promise, a prince of preachers, Phillips Brooks, has said, "When, truly obedient, we have been made like Him whom we obey, then, only then, we have overcome in the struggle of life. And then we must be pillars in

His temple. With wills harmonized with His will; with souls that love and hate in truest unison of sympathy with His; with no purposes left in us but His purposes,—then we have come to what He wants the world to come to. We have taken our places in the slowly rising temple of His holy will.

"To whatever worlds He carries our souls when they shall pass out of these imprisoning bodies, in those worlds these souls of ours shall find themselves part of the same great temple; for it belongs not to this earth alone. There can be no end of the universe where God is, to which that growing temple does not reach, the temple of a creation to be wrought at last into a perfect utterance of God by a perfect obedience to God.

"O my friends, that is the victory that is awaiting you. Slowly, through all the universe, that temple of God is being built. Wherever, in any world, a soul, by free-willed obedience, catches the fire of God's likeness, it is set into the growing walls, a living stone. When, in your hard fight, in your tiresome drudgery, or terrible temptation, you catch the purpose of your being, and give yourself to God, and so give Him the chance to give Himself to you, your life, a living stone, is taken up into that growing wall. And the other

living, burning stones claim and welcome and embrace it. They bind it in with themselves. They make it sure with their assurance, and they gather assurance out of it. The great wall of divine likeness through human obedience grows and grows, as one tried and purified and ripened life after another is laid into it; and down at the base, the corner-stone of all, there lies the life of Him who, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect, became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."

"O heavenly Jerusalem,
Of everlasting halls,
Thrice blessed are the people
Thou storest in thy walls.

"Thou art the golden mansion,
Where saints forever sing,
The seat of God's own chosen,
The palace of the king."

WHO HE HELPED.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatics, and those that had the palsy: and He healed them.—*St. Matt.* 4 : 23, 24.

JESUS "went about doing good," "and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people," and yet, then as now, "there was a division among the people because of Him."

Some believed in Him; some did not; some received Him; some did not; some were healed by Him; some were not.

And why not? He was as willing to help one as another, and yet some were helped, and some not. Why not? Because they did not want His help. They did not believe in Him, or in what He had to give. Some thought Him a dangerous man. Some thought Him a bad man. All manner of evil things were said of Him; that He was "a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sin-

ners"; that He had a devil, and "cast out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils." And yet many believed that He could help them, and that He would help them: and so they went to Him, "and He healed them." They needed help. They asked help of Him, and they received it. Their plea was their need and His power. He recognized their plea and healed them.

Nor is He unwilling to do for us what He did for them. That very Lord and Saviour Christ is as ready and willing to help now as of old in Galilee and the Holy Land, and we can still come to Him, and receive of Him; of His very self; of His power and His grace; the inspiration of His presence; the light of His countenance, and the help of His grace, just as men did of old, when He was visibly here on the earth. In His glorified humanity He has ascended into heaven, where, as we say in the Creed, He "sitteth on the right hand of God," as Him to whom "all power is given in heaven and earth," and yet He is with us still, as He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Yes, He is with us still, still doing for men substantially what He did of old when He "went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the King-

dom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people."

True, many do not believe it, and so do not turn to Him, seeking what He would be so glad to give, but, thank God, millions do believe in Him, in His presence, in His power to help, and in His willingness to help: and so they turn to Him, asking help, and receiving help. Their plea is their need, and His power. It is their valid plea. It has never been made in vain. And yet many have not faith to believe it. It seems too good to be true: and so they miss the blessing that might be theirs. Somehow, they fail to see that God is not against us but for us, and that "no good thing will He withhold from them that live a godly life." He has no good thing that He would not gladly give us. Yes, there is nothing good for us that He is not now giving as fast as He can. If by the spirit that we are of, we shut out from us what He would fain give us, then we go unblest, not because He would not bless, but because we are unblessable.

And yet all the while the Lord is waiting to help, and it might be said of any one of us, as it was of those that received Him of old, that "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

Still some one may say, "Is not this too good to be true? Will He help all who come to Him pleading their need, and His power? Is there no exception, no reservation?" No: none, absolutely none, to such as believing in His power, plead their need.

Did He ever turn away any that came to Him? Not one. He helped them all, Matthew the publican, Simon the leper, Nicodemus, Zaccheus, Bartimeus, the dying malefactor. There were none so poor, or wretched, or outcast, as to be beyond His pity and His power. And He is now, to-day, and every day, all to us that He was of old to men in Galilee, and we can come to Him now just as men did then, saying, "Lord, help me!" for He is now what He was then, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and forever," "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."

"I heard the voice of Jesus say
Behold I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink, and live.
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him."

IF ANY MAN WILLETH.

If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.—*St. John* 7 : 17.

THE Revised Version more correctly reads, "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God." It was at "the feast of the Jews, the feast of Tabernacles." Multitudes thronged the holy city. The disciples went up to the feast while as yet Jesus abode still in Galilee. "The Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, Where is He? And there was much murmuring of the people concerning Him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay, but He deceiveth the people." "About the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught." The people wondered at the wisdom of His words, and said, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" It was a mystery to them. They could not understand it. He came from Galilee, rude "Galilee, of the nations." For thirty years He had lived in a rude village, so rude that it was said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" And yet, "Never man spake like this man."

What wonder that "the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" He never sat at the feet of their great teachers, and yet no man ever spake with such authority and power. It was altogether a mystery to them. They said, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" So Jesus told them how it was. There was no mystery about it. He said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." He corrected their mistaken notion that He had never learned. He had learned. As child, as boy, as man, He had learned. When only twelve years old, sitting in the midst of the doctors in the temple, hearing them and asking them questions, they were astonished at His understanding and answers. Yes: He had learned, learned of the Father. He had lived to Him, and for Him. For three and thirty years He had done God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. He had never, no not so much as by one hair's breadth, deviated from the perfect will of God. So He could say, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me."

Then He told those that heard Him, how it might be with them as it was with Him; said, "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of

God." We have here made clear the secret, the sad secret, of so much of failure to know and do God's will.

It is because so many lives are at cross-purpose with the real reason of their being. It is because so many live out their days without ever asking, or, apparently, wanting to know the purpose of life. But once, and once only, there was a man, very man of very man, who did know the purpose of life, and never missed it, never once throughout His whole way in this world. He knew God's will. He did God's will. He never willed to do other than the will of God. So, when His way on earth was at an end, He could look into God's face and say, "Father, I have glorified Thee on the earth."

Men said He had never learned. That was one of their many mistakes concerning Him. He had learned. Where? Everywhere. In Mary's arms, at Mary's side, in house, in home, in shop, in synagogue, on seashore and mountainside, in the lone wilderness, by the grave of His dead friend, in the struggle in Gethsemane, in the darkness and horror of the cruel Cross, "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

Men marveled at Him. He was a mystery to them, but never to Himself. He said, "My

doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." Nor that only, He said, "If any man—there is no exception, none—if any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God."

We, if we are wise, will heed His words. If we really are His disciples, we will learn of Him. If any willeth as God wills concerning him, he is a saved man. Would you be like God? Then will to be like Him, and He will help you to be like Him. Would you follow Christ, your Lord? Then will to, and set about it.

Do you want, at the last, to be with Him where He is? Then will to be, as He willeth concerning you. He said, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

"Little and great is man:
Great if he will, or if he will
A pigmy still:
For what he will he can."

"ALL THAT THE FATHER HATH."

All things that the Father hath are Mine.—*St. John* 16 : 15.

Our blessed Lord was an enigma to those around Him when He was here among men. They wondered at His words and were amazed at His works. His power perplexed them. They could not and did not deny it, nor could they account for it in any satisfactory way. They said, "From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands?" "Some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils."

"Many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye Him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" So it was when He was here among men: and, indeed, He has been the wonder of the world from that day to this. His power not only differs from that of all other men in degree but in kind. It is not only a question of what He has done for men, but of what He

is still doing. The influence of other men has, for the most part, died with them, and, so, is an ever-lessening force. But it is not so in His case. On the contrary, His is an ever-increasing hold on the hearts and minds of men. We rightly honor the names of those who did great things for men in their day, but we do not live to please them. Who of us does this or that to win the approval of a Washington or a Lincoln? But this is just what every Christian does daily for Jesus Christ. For His sake we refrain from this and that, and for His sake daily do this and that. The name of many a great man might be wholly obliterated with hardly a regret on our part, and without having any appreciable effect on us one way or the other. But if the name of Jesus Christ should be obliterated, the faith and hope of the best men and women in the world would perish, and for them life would lose all that now makes it most worth living. This is a fact with respect to Jesus Christ and with respect to Him only.

Wherein lies His unique power? What is the secret of Jesus? It is in fact, no secret, for He never wearied in trying to tell men that His power was of God. He said it came from His relation to the Father; said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing

of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do; for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son," and, again, "All things that the Father hath are Mine," "I and My Father are one," "I do nothing of Myself," "I do always those things that please Him."

We see then that a human life may be so identified with the life of God as to share in all that God has.

In Jesus Christ there was a man, very man, whose whole life was one with the Father: and, so, absolutely all that God had was His. All the love, the power, the omnipotence of the Father, was His. What wonder then that He could say, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them"? What wonder that St. Paul should say, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"? He said, "All things that the Father hath are Mine." And should not we also be able to say it in some sense? Yes, you, too, should be able to say, "All things that the Father hath are mine." This, doubtless, was what the apostle meant in saying to his Corinthian converts, "All things are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." You would account the boy happy who could point

to his father's broad acres, and say, "These are mine: I am heir to them all."

Christian believer, look out on field and forest; lift up your eyes unto the hills; yes, up to the wide universe; up to heaven, and to the God of heaven and earth, and say, "All things that the Father hath are mine." Everything that would be good for us He wants us to have. "No good thing will He withhold from them that live a godly life." God is giving us now all that He can, and, no doubt, waiting to give us many good things which we do not want. Why then should we be weak when we might be strong? Why should we go halting on our way when we should be full of faith and of a good courage,

> "Strong in the strength which God supplies
> Through His Eternal Son"?

Let us try to live in such relation to God as will enable Him to bless us, and then bless us He surely will. He said to His people of old, "Your sins have withholden good things from you." It is the case of us all. Keep yourself in the way of blessing, and blessing will be yours. These Lenten days are appointed as helps to holiness. If, now, we will prepare and make ready the soil of our soul, the good seed will find place in us, "and bring forth

fruit with patience." Know that in any case God must be something to us, and that what He will be to us depends on what we are to Him. He is always the same, but what He is to us individually must depend upon our personal attitude towards Him. He is always doing the best He can for us, but we can only receive what we really want. It is for us to say what that will be. It is not *His* unwillingness but *ours* that bars God's blessings. He is always "more ready to hear than we to pray, and wont to give more than either we desire or deserve."

Blessed Lord, help us to see what we might be.

"O Lord, seek us, O Lord, find us
In Thy patient care.
Be Thy Love before, behind us,
Round us, everywhere:
Lest the god of this world blind us,
Lest he speak us fair,
Lest he forge a chain to bind us,
Lest he bait a snare.
Turn not from us, call to mind us,
Find, embrace us, bear;
Be Thy Love before, behind us,
Round us, everywhere."

"TO EVERY MAN HIS WORK."

The Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work ; and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning. Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.—*St. Mark* 13 : 34–37.

As on the day of the great denunciation, Jesus was, for the last time, leaving the temple, "one of His disciples saith unto Him, Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering, said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down."

As if stunned by the stern prophecy, the disciples silently followed their Master over the Kidron valley up the slopes of Olivet on their way to Bethany. It was not till they rested on the mount "over against the temple," that they ventured to say, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" In answer to these questions our Lord told them of the last things that should befall not only

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for Jerusalem, for her temple, and the then passing dispensation, but for this Christian dispensation, and for the world. It was in telling His disciples of these last things that He said, "The Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work."

As to the great final coming of the Lord it will be our wisdom to simply receive what He, Himself, has seen fit to reveal, without raising curious questions, or trying to be wise above what is written. Whatever else it may be, it will, doubtless, be not only the consummation of all His lesser comings and judgments, but the complete triumph of God's purpose, and the final vindication of His righteous rule. Of the manner of that coming of the Lord we cannot now know much, nor do we need to know. It is enough to know that the same Lord who will judge us then is judging us now, and that He judges us as He finds us. He tells us that He has committed His interests into our hands, and "given unto every man his work." Believing this it is our part, by God's help, to address ourselves to the doing of our appointed work in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call us. We are the Lord's servants, every one of us. We may not

admit it; we may not know it, but so it is. It is not only the case of those who confess it before God and man in solemn vow and promise, but also of those who do not; for willingly, or unwillingly, we must serve the Lord; show either the might of His power to help and to save, or the poverty of those "having no hope, and without God in the world." Yes, willingly or unwillingly, we must serve the Lord. He placed us here in our appointed place, giving unto every man his work. Our particular work is ours only because we have it as a gift of God. This many altogether forget, and, so, go about their work thinking it theirs, not God's, and so do it poorly or selfishly; make it not God's work to be done as unto the Lord, but the world's work, or, alas, sometimes the devil's.

So we need to remember this that we so often forget, that the Master "gave authority to His servants, and to every man his work." And He is coming again. That is sure. We do not know just when; only that the sum-total of the world's work, and our particular part in it, will be tried and tested at the last, and "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day will declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is."

Yes, we, every one of us, stand with some appointed work for God and man. "He gave unto every man his work;" the work he should do for the Master. It is his work, a work that no one else can do, a work which left undone must remain undone forever. And we are doing our work, or not doing it; shirking it, or doing it "heartily, as unto the Lord, and not to men," but however that may be, the end is at hand! The Lord is at hand! That coming in power and great glory, is as sure as the life of God. We know not the day, or the hour that shall come sweeping in the silence, but that it is nigh, even at the door; that we stand, every hour, as by a veiled mystery that any moment may flash its awful splendors on the startled vision of our soul, making manifest to all men the Saviour and the Judge. When standing, in the strengh of God in our appointed place, or when lapped in sinful self-indulgence wholly unmindful of pledged privilege, and solemn trust, unlooked for, unexpected, we will stand in the presence of the Judge! Or, more likely yet, before He comes to all men He will come to you and to me personally, saying, "Give an account of thy stewardship; thou mayest be no longer steward."

Yes: we will meet the Master when He

comes, or we will go forth to meet Him on the way: but when? When? It may be to-morrow, or to-day, or to-night! God knoweth! As for us we only know that the hour is at hand; that soon *the* day, *that* day, the day of the Lord will dawn, and through the vast immensities will loom the Everlasting City of our God.

"Thou art coming, O my Saviour!
Thou art coming, O my King!
In Thy beauty all-resplendent,
In Thy glory all-transcendent;
Well may we rejoice and sing.

"Thou art coming, Thou art coming;
We shall meet Thee on Thy way;
We shall see Thee, we shall know Thee,
We shall bless Thee, we shall show Thee,
All our hearts could never say."

COMFORTING ONE ANOTHER.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.—2 *Cor.* 1 : 3, 4.

In these days of self-examination and prayer, when we will, no doubt, charge ourselves with this and that shortcoming, let us not forget to ask ourselves whether we are the help and comfort that we might be to those around us.

When once we stop to think of it we see that comfort is a great and common need of humankind. We have only to think of who we poor mortals are to see that it is so. We are sinners, every one of us: that is those who have missed the mark and come short of the design and purpose of Almighty God in our creation. We were designed for a certain work and a certain end, and we have neither done the one or reached the other. As we say in the General Confession, "we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done." We have not all

sinned in just the same way, and yet the fact remains that we have all missed the mark; that we have all come short of our duty, and are far, very far, from what we might have been. We have gone stumbling along on our way in life, not only failing to come up to the mark but committing many actual transgressions. And then, too, we all meet with temptation, trial, pain and loss in one way or another. And so there is absolutely no one of us but needs the help and comfort of his brother man: and this that we all need we can all give, and should gladly give to those around us. It is not that many need material benefits, but we all need kindly human relations, sympathetic fellow-feeling and neighborliness. And yet we constantly excuse ourselves for lack of helpfulness to those around us. Too often we assume that they have no need of us, and often from fancy or prejudice we hold ourselves aloof from others, neither trying to help them, or letting them help us. Perhaps we have taken offense when none was intended, or have imagined a slight when none was dreamed of, forgetful of that charity that thinketh no evil and is not easily provoked. But is mere whim, or fancy, or prejudice, or even lack of congeniality, a sufficient cause for withholding any kindly service that we

might render? What would become of us if God should treat us as we often treat our fellow men? Can we think of Him as saying, "You have sinned against Me; you have wronged Me, and so I will have nothing more to do with you"? Alas for us should God do to us as so often we have done to our fellow men!

We say to God in prayer, "Thy Kingdom come," and then wonder why it seems so slow in coming, forgetful how Christ said, "The Kingdom of God is within you." We think of Christ's Kingdom as coming in some external, spectacular way, whereas He said it "cometh not with observation," "the Kingdom of God is within you." If we would all see what that means we would begin to see that the Kingdom will come in us, and around us, as fast as we want it to come, and will do what we can to have it come. In fact the millennium would begin to-day if all Christians would begin doing God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. If only we would leave off all evil thinking and speaking; if we would be merciful as God is merciful, and forgiving and kind, pitiful and tender hearted as God is, "not rendering evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing"; if we would let that mind be in us which was in Christ, His millennial reign

would begin straightway; would begin to-day. And what doth hinder? Surely, nothing on God's part. No good thing will He withhold. Nothing hinders but our lack of that mind which was in Christ. He said, "All things that the Father hath are Mine," and we would be able to say it also if we were wholly as He was.

As we go along on life's journey let us make it a way of life by following Him who said, "I am the way;" "follow Me." Then will we "go about doing good" as He did: then will we be ever ready to "lend a hand" to those journeying with us. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

"Comfort one another
For the way is often dreary,
And the feet are often weary,
And the heart is often sad.
There is heavy burden-bearing,
When it seems that none are caring,
And we half forget that *ever* we were glad.

"Comfort one another
With the hand-clasp close and tender,
With the sweetness love can render,
And the looks of friendly eyes.
Do not wait with grace unspoken,
While life's daily bread is broken—
Gentle speech is oft like manna from the skies."

GOING UP INTO THE TEMPLE TO PRAY.

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.—*St. Luke* 18: 10.

As, in these forty days, we go up into the temple to pray, we will do well to remember that the blessing that we bring down from the temple will in no small measure depend on the spirit in which we go up into the temple. This is made plain in the parable in which our blessed Lord tells us how "two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican." They were representative men of their day: the one of the very respectable and the other of a disreputable class. The Pharisee began well, but he did not go on well. He began with thanksgiving, said, "Lord, I thank Thee": but for what? For himself, the Pharisee, and that he was such a very proper person; so much better than other men: "God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this

publican." The publican, he thought, had good need to stand "afar off" and beat his breast, but not he. He was all that he should be. Nay, better than he need be. Not only did he do all that the law required, but much more, and he meant that God should know what a good man he was. He said, "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Not so the publican. "Standing afar off, he would not lift up so much as his eyes towards heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." And the infallible Christ said, "I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The Pharisee was wholly deceived in regard to himself. He had altogether too good an opinion of himself. He seemed to suppose that God would take him on his own estimate of himself, whereas he was altogether lacking in that humble and penitent spirit which alone is of great worth in the sight of God. The Pharisee judged only in respect of the grosser sort of sins, and as he was free from these, he thought that all was well with him, and blest himself, and gave thanks for being such a very proper person.

Now every Christian will shrink from the Pharisaic spirit, and reputation, but we may be sure that if we are going on in life in habitual self-satisfaction; with no regrets for our shortcomings; with no sorrow for our sins; without contrition and amendment of life; with no self-accusation for duties left undone; if the days come and go without thought of what we might be, and should be; with no pleading before God for forgiveness and grace, then though we may not repeat the very insolence of the Pharisee, still we are with him in spirit, and so shall go down from the Lord's house to our own to-day no more justified or blest than was that Pharisee of old time. Let us remember that gross, open sins, are not the only sins there are in the world. They are bad enough and unless repented of and put away, they will kill the soul; but sins of the spirit can do this just as well. In a sense they are more dangerous in that not being so open to human sight they can be cherished and indulged sometimes without even being suspected of men. The sins of the drunkard and the liar "are open beforehand, going before to judgment." They declare beforehand the final judgment, whereas the sins of the mischief-maker, the tattler and the slanderer, are not so manifest to men,

although, perhaps, just as abhorrent in the sight of God.

Let us then remember that there are a great many sins besides those that lie on the surface, and, too, that the more marked sins may, and often are avoided, when those subtler mischiefs of the spirit are indulged in without let or hindrance.

Yes, this very freedom from open sins may minister to these subtle sins of the spirit. There is, we should remember, a white devil of spiritual pride as well as a black devil of fleshly lusts. Satan, it is said, can transform himself into an angel of light when it serves his purpose, and we may be sure it will be all the same to him whether we go down to hell as open evil livers, or as proud, self-righteous Pharisees. Yes, he may be all the more pleased to have it so, for these we are told are twofold more the children of hell than the other.

So, in our Lenten questioning, let us ask ourselves above all about these sins of the spirit; ask whether we are trying to cast out pride and self-conceit; whether we think of ourselves "more highly than we ought to think," or soberly as becometh disciples of Him who said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

"Now are the days of humblest prayer,
When consciences to God lie bare,
And mercy most delights to spare.

"Oh, harken when we cry,
Chastise us with Thy fear;
Yet Father! in the multitude
Of Thy compassions, hear."

PLEASING OTHERS.

We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification, for even Christ pleased not Himself.—*Romans* 15 : 1, 2, 3.

CERTAIN captious critics of Christianity allege that it has so much to do with the life of the world to come that it lessens our interest in the life that now is and detracts from our present work and duty here on the earth. In other words the charge is that it chiefly concerns itself about a future life ; that it is *otherworldly.* The late Professor Clifford made this his special indictment against Christianity, and in so doing claimed that the whole duty of man is confined to this present life, and that it can best be done without any regard to any other life than this. Now the answer to this charge is that it is not true. It is bearing false witness. Christianity does not chiefly concern itself about a far-away world, but about Christian believing and living now and here in this world. Chiefly it has to do with our present duty to God, to ourselves and to our fellow men. Nor is it

true either that it would be better to confine our thoughts wholly to our worldly affairs without any reference to God and our future well-being. It would not be better: no, nor half as good. It would not be good at all.

We all know that it is not an easy thing to live as we should, or to help others to so live. At the best it is a hard thing to order our lives aright. In trying to do so we need, and constantly need, all the helps and inducements that are of any assistance to us. And with them all, we will still sadly come short of our whole duty to God, ourselves, and to those around us. No: we cannot afford to dispense with any aid or inducement to right living. To destroy, or even lessen any help to good conduct, would be to lessen the safety of society, and the value of human life. Nor can there be any doubt but that the fear of God is a restraint, and a great restraint upon many people, as it ought to be. To destroy or lessen that restraint would be an irreparable loss. Nor can there be any doubt that it would be a sad, an unspeakable loss, to rob humankind of the comforts and consolations of Christianity.

No: it would not be better, or anything like as well for men to devote all their thought and energy to the things of this life

without reference to any other. To do that would narrow and cheapen life. It would cabin it within the brief limits of our days on earth. It would paralyze every limitless hope or endeavor. It might as well be said that it would be better to bring up a boy with no thought of his being anything but a boy. From the first, and all along, his training has reference to his *future*. Nor should it be planned only with reference to time but to eternity as well.

It is not true, however, that Christianity is so otherworldly that it lessens the importance of our present work in the world. Holy Scripture is full of good advice and wise precepts, as to right living now and here; precepts which if generally practised would make human life a thousand times nobler, better, sweeter, than it is. Thus, St. Paul says, "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves: let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not Himself." Think how much better a place to live in this world would be if we would heed this admonition. To think of others; to please others; to "please our neighbor for his good to edification," how many of us make this a ruling principle with us? And yet we know that it ought to be,

and that there is not a community in all Christendom that would not be far happier and better for following this and the numberless like teachings of Holy Scripture. Only think what a blessing it would bring if we would all try to "please our neighbor, for his good to edification." It means his up-building, his completion. Just as a house is built up, stone upon stone, until it stands strong, finished, complete, that is what the word "edification" implies.

So for us to "please our neighbor to his good, for edification," is to help to his completion in Christ Jesus. True, that will not fully be "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," but we, every one of us, can contribute to that great consummation of Christ's redeeming work.

"My God, wilt Thou accept, and will not we
Give aught to Thee?
The kept we lose, the offered we retain
Or find again.

"Yet if our gift were lost, we well might lose
All for Thy use:
Well lost for Thee, whose love is all for us
Gratuitous."

LEANNESS OF SOUL.

And He saved them from the adversary's hand: and delivered them from the hand of the enemy. As for those that troubled them, the waters overwhelmed them: there was not one of them left. Then believed they His words: and sang praise unto Him. But within a while they forgat His works; and would not abide His counsel. But lust came upon them in the wilderness: and they tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their desire: and sent leanness withal into their soul.—*Psalm* 106:10–15.

THIS was said of the chosen people of old time, but of how many of this present generation, as of that, may it be said: "He gave them their desire, and sent leanness withal into their soul." It is the natural result of unsanctified desires. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap": that, not something else. God does not force us into conformity to His holy will. He gives light, knowledge, grace, blessing. He seeks and constrains with all the Divine compassion and loving kindness, but then we may be proof against it all; may, if we will, walk in our own devious ways, and so come to live as if "without God and without Christ in the world."

Nor do we need to live bad lives in order to this. Not at all: we have simply to live without consciousness of God or of His will and desire concerning us. We may choose any object in life we will. It may be simply to be rich, or to gain position, place or power, or only to "enjoy life" as the saying is. The world is wide and full of many things,—things "pleasant to the eye," and often, apparently, "to be desired to make one wise." There are any number of things to choose from: and possibly you may get what you want. You are not likely to: still you may, and yet, in the end, find what an empty and unsatisfying thing it is after all: or, even a worse lot may be yours, and that is to have your soul grow so thin and small as to be perfectly satisfied with perishable things. In such case especially is the saying verified—"He gave them their desire, and sent leanness withal into their soul." In fact it will be our case unless we are workers together with God, loving that which He loves and desiring that which He desires concerning us. It may not always seem so. The things of the world may satisfy for awhile, but not always: no, nor for long. The time will come when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them," and you will begin to see that "the world passeth away and the

lust thereof"; that only "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. And then, you will come to feel that one look of the living God would outweigh the world and all that it has to give.

"Can man rejoice who lives in hourly fear?
Can man make haste who toils beneath a load?
Can man feel rest who has no fixed abode?
All he lays hold of or can see or hear
Is passing by, is prompt to disappear,
Is doomed, foredoomed, continued in no stay:
This day he breathes in is his latter day,
This year of time is this world's latter year.

"Thus in himself is he most miserable:—
Out of himself, Lord, lift him up to Thee,
Out of himself, and all these worlds that flee;
Hold him in patience underneath the rod,
Anchor his hope beyond life's ebb and swell,
Perfect his patience in the love of God."

LOOKING AND SEEING.

And he sought to see Jesus who He was.—*St. Luke* 19 : 3.

ZACCHEUS may have been moved by mere curiosity in seeking to see Jesus, who He was, and yet there must have been something better in the despised little publican than men supposed or he himself suspected; for, looking at Jesus, he saw so much more in Him than most men did. And what he saw brought him greater blessing. For him, sight led to insight, and he began to see Jesus, who He was. Not only did Zaccheus look at Him, but He saw Him; probably not exactly as St. John saw Him, still, looking at Jesus, he saw something in Him that he had never seen in any one else, and that sight touched his inmost soul. It was to him a beatific vision. And so Zaccheus could never be again what he had been. He saw Jesus, and that sight won his soul. He received Him joyfully. Yes, there must have been an unsuspected soul of goodness in him, for, looking at Jesus, he saw in Him what the many had failed to see. He did not simply look at Him as did the staring multitude, but in some real way he saw Him, who He was, and that sight wholly won his soul. The old

Zaccheus, the bad Zaccheus, withered away. The old Zaccheus died. A new Zaccheus was born in him. Seeing Jesus saved him, and at once he "stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." The multitude looked at Jesus. Zaccheus saw Him. Those that only looked at Jesus, saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him.

Indeed, merely looking at Jesus made the many not the better, but the worse. It led some to say, "He hath a devil and is mad: why hear ye Him?" "Some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils." Some looked at Him and "did spit in His face, and buffeted Him, and others smote Him with the palms of their hands." Still, some there were who not only looked at Him, but saw Him. It led Peter to say, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It led Thomas to say, "My Lord and my God!" It led St. Paul to say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Brethren, a well-spent Lent will help us to see Jesus, who He is. These forty days will in fact be useless, and worse than useless to us, unless they help us to see Jesus, who He is. True, in this world we will never adequately see Him, but if we are His, we can and will, more and more, see Him. And if this be our blessedness, we will, at the last, see Him as He is. The promise is, "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold a far stretching land." And better yet are the Gospel promises. The Lord said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand": and His apostle, looking eagerly to the great change, said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is."

"Oh, the joy to see Thee reigning,
Thee, our own belovèd Lord!
Every tongue Thy name confessing,
Worship, honor, glory, blessing,
Brought to Thee with one accord;
Thee, our Master, and our Friend,
Vindicated and enthroned;
Unto earth's remotest end
Glorified, adored, and owned!"

TAKING UP YOUR CROSS.

Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.—*St. Matt.* 16:24.

JESUS knew whereof He spake. He had borne crosses of many kinds, and at that very time was on His way to "the hill called Calvary," to bear the Cross of all crosses. From the first He had walked in its long shadow, and when He came close up to it, He told His disciples plainly how "He must suffer many things, and be crucified and killed." Peter said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee." But Jesus rebuking him said "unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

This that He said to His disciples then, He is saying still, to you, to me, to all men, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny

himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." But the many do not seem to see what He means by it. "A cross (a man says to himself) is not a pleasant thing to bear. It is hard and heavy. I do not want it, and will not have it if I can help it." Well, that is the feeling of the natural man, but his mistake is in thinking he can escape it. He cannot. It is there. It lies in our way in life. You may not have come to it yet, at least not to any very heavy cross, but some day you will. It lies in your way in life, and you are on the way towards it. You will come to it, and then you will take it up, or it will be laid on you. You will bear it. You will be obliged to bear it. It is a part of the discipline of life. You were born to it. As to your cross you have no choice. It has come to you, or will come to you, as it does to all men. It is there. You cannot escape it. You must see then that it is not a question as to whether you will bear your cross, but *how* you will bear it. It is your cross; in some sense unlike that of any one else, or, if not in itself then in the circumstances in which it comes and under which you will be obliged to bear it. You see it is not a question as to whether you will bear your cross. That comes from the fact of being born into a world of sin and suffer-

ing; of testing, of discipline, and of possible, and even of triumphant endurance. Nor is God the mere observer of how we bear our cross, but the merciful, ever-loving Father, wanting and waiting to be the helper of us all. He has made our cause His. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Not only did He come to make God known to us in terms within our apprehension, but to be one of us, very man; to live our life; to meet its temptations and trials, and show us how to meet them, and make them minister to our good. Yes, He says, "I know your life; I lived it; I know the secret of how it can be lived; I went through it up to the right hand of God the Father; I came to help and save you; follow Me"; "If any man will come after Me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." He says this to us. He has a right to say it. He earned the right "by the things which He suffered. He knows what the cross stands for. He bore it for us all. He made it the royal road to that throne on high where He reigns as Him, unto whom all power is given in heaven and earth. And so He has the right to say, 'I am the way,' 'Follow Me,' 'If any man will come after Me,

let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'" It is as if He said, "Stand where I stood; keep close to Me; abide in Me and I will abide in you; My strength will be your strength; deny yourself, your lower self; take up your cross and follow Me; bear the Cross and it will bear you, bear you safely to Me, where I am." It is His wish for you. He said, "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am."

The observance of the time will bring blessing to us only as it brings us more to that mind which was in Him.

"All glory to redeeming grace,
Disdaining not our evil case,
But showing us our Saviour's face!"

"BE OF GOOD CHEER."

Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.—*St. John* 16: 33.

LENT is a sober season, and yet those that rightly observe it find it rich in revelations of the loving kindnesses of the Lord. And so it has its own joys. As of old, "The secret of the Lord is among them that fear Him." If to be more "in the Spirit," we have abstained from earthly joys, we will come to see a new meaning in the Evangelist's statement as, in telling us how our Lord overcame the temptations of the adversary, he says, "Then the devil leaveth Him, and behold angels came and ministered unto Him." Angels of comfort are always coming to us if we will welcome them. The Lord said to His disciples, "I will not leave you comfortless (desolate, or orphaned as the reading might be): I will come to you," and of the promised Comforter, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." In taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto us, He reminds us how the Lord said, "The words that

I speak unto you, they are spirit, they are life." Let us then have them much in mind these Lenten days, and we will find them to our great and endless comfort. They recall that which we have often heard, but of which often forgetting, we have need to be often reminded. They tell us who God is, and who we are, and what we should be, and might be if only we would. We will do well then to remind ourselves every day, how great are our blessings in Christ; to remember how He tells us that God is our Father; that we are His children; that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." What wonder then that St. Paul should say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He is for us. We need to know it to our comfort. "No good thing will He withhold from them that live a godly life." There is nothing that God has that would be good for us, that He is not willing and waiting to give. He is, now, giving us every good thing that we can receive to our everlasting good. He is giving more than either we desire or deserve. "He giveth His beloved in sleep," that is even whilst they sleep. That selfsame Spirit of God who first "breathed into man the breath of life, and made him a living

soul," will still make every breath we breathe a breath of life, if we will it should be so. Yes: God wants us to be well and happy; wants us to be good, and "go about doing good," as did Jesus Christ, His Son our Lord. He wants us "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." We might be, and would be, if only we would "take unto us the whole armor of God." We are not orphans or waifs thrust out into the wide world. Our Lord said, "I will not leave you orphans." We have a *Father*, and a Father's house full of all good things. We need to know it. To some it seems too good to be true, and so they go mournfully when they should be strong and of a good courage. If only we really want those good things that God hath prepared for them that love Him, they are ours. "All things are yours," says St. Paul. Know then that it is so. Why should we have hard thoughts of God? He is not the great taskmaster up in a far-off heaven, careless of mankind. That was an old pagan notion that still seems to be the thought of many. It is one of the many survivals of paganism still traceable in Christendom. Nor is God Fate or Doom, as so many still seem to suppose. No, nor infinite energy only. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." That

is the true Christian teaching that Jesus Christ came to reveal to men, and yet to most men it seems something too good to be true. They still cling to the old Hebraic notion of a far away Deity who rarely leaves His distant heaven, and when He does it is on a "visitation" amongst men to punish them well. So they fear God, but they never think of loving Him or serving Him. In fact they dread the thought of God and account themselves fortunate in being left alone on the earth. They would turn pale at the thought of God visiting them. They are willing to think of Him as the God of Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, but would be sorry to think of Him as "about their path, and about their bed," knowing all they think and say and do. Yes, the average man is more Hebrew or Mohammedan than Christian. The God with whom he thinks he has to do, is one of only rare and solemn occasions, such as a death in the family, or some other sad "visitation." He fears God. He dreads "visitations." He wants God far from him. He may not put it that way, but practically that seems to be the theology of the average man. In other words, in his thought of God he is more a Hebrew or a Mohammedan than a Christian. His thought of God is an uncomfortable thought,

which he does not entertain when he can help it.

Now Jesus Christ our Lord tells us that God is our Father; that He is the God and Father of us all; that we are His children, and so brother men, every one of us; and, too, that our destiny depends upon our treatment of our fellow men. In putting His protecting hand over us He puts it over every other human being, and especially over little children, and over the weak, the poor, the helpless and the hungry, saying, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." The Christian teaching is that God is the immanent, omniscient Deity "in whom we live, and move, and have our being"; the God and Father of us all; that He was most fully made manifest to men in Jesus Christ, His Son our Lord, the eternal Word, who was with God and was God, "who was made flesh, and dwelt among us"; was crucified, dead and buried; who rose again and ascended into heaven, where He now reigns as Him, unto whom all power is given in heaven and earth.

In His teaching He said, "The Kingdom of God is within you," and His apostle tells of Him as "Christ in you, the hope of glory." If then our highest hope is "that He may

dwell in us and we in Him," let us "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might," remembering how He said, "Be of good cheer: I have evercome the world."

"What can I do but trust Thee, Lord!
For Thou art God alone?
My soul is safer in Thy hands,
Father, than in my own."

OUR DESTINY.

Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world : for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took Me in ; naked and ye clothed Me ; I was sick, and ye visited Me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.—*St. Matt.* 25 : 34, 35, 36.

In these still days of self-examination and prayer let us not fail to think how it will be with us at the last, when we shall hear the sober footfalls of the Angel of Death drawing nearer and nearer, and

> " The solemn death-bell tolls
> For our own departing souls ? "

How will it be with us as we look up into the vast immensities, and know, know for a certainty, what awaits us—in Eternity ? Are there any tests that will tell us, now and here, how it will be with us then and there ? Yes, there are many to be found among the words of our blessed Lord, and to these we should give good heed. He says, " If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me " ; " Ye

are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you"; "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." These, and the many like words of our Saviour Christ, are those by which we should try and examine ourselves now and here, if we would know how it will be with us "when our last hour cometh." Let us heed His tests. They tell us what will determine our destiny. Many have invented tests of their own, instead of heeding those that the Lord Himself has given. They have supposed that orthodoxy is the essential thing; that our eternal destiny will depend upon the correctness of our theological opinions. On this theory the whole machinery of Church and state has often been employed for the extirpation of real, or supposed, erroneous opinions. Thinking that destiny will depend on doctrine, men have thought they were doing God service, in inflicting untold sufferings upon their fellow men for not being of their way of thinking. Turning from the tests that mere men have made, let us give good heed to those that rest on the sure words of the one only infallible Teacher. Now it is a most significant thing that He tells us, that with Him final ac-

ceptance or final rejection will depend upon our treatment of our fellow men.

Good opinions are good. An orthodox theology is good. Good observances are good. We should walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, and yet none of these things will necessarily win for us the Lord's welcome, and the Lord's approval. No one of these things will necessarily decide our destiny. God looks on the heart. Christian living is the only certain sign of Christian believing. Deeds, not words, will tell the story. "Not every one," said the Saviour, "that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." And His apostle says, "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is."

In short the teaching of the New Testament is summed in this teaching of our Lord, which, in effect, is that our destiny will depend upon our treatment of our fellow men. Every man living is enclosed in His protecting arms. In effect He says, "In touching your brother-men, you touch Me; help them, and you help Me; serve them, and you serve Me; hurt

them, and you hurt Me; do good to them, and you do good to Me. No service that you can render will be without its reward." "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Especially around little children are the protecting arms of the Good Shepherd. He says, "Whoso shall offend (cause to stumble) one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Yes, in the final judgment we will find that our destiny will depend upon our treatment of our fellow men. If then you have hurt another, be sorry for it; repent; show works meet for repentance by making whatever reparation you can. If it be a hurt that cannot be made good, as alas, often is the case, at least repent; repent and pray that your sin may be forgiven you for Jesus Christ's sake. But wherever reparation is possible make it. It will be a sign of sincerity. Without it there has been no repentance. If then reparation be possible, thank God, and make it without delay, for otherwise your sin will stand against you. "Let this mind be in you

which was in Christ," for then will you see the blessedness of service.

Be good: do good, and so put on Christ, "Who went about doing good." Try to be like Him "remembering always, that baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him."

That is the will of God concerning you. How did you touch your fellow men? What was your example? Did you help or hinder? That will decide your destiny. You owe it to God, to your neighbor and to yourself, to try, by God's help, to do His holy will on earth as it is done in heaven.

At the last, at the last, may you find mercy and acceptance with Him who said, "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world; for I was an hungered and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me."

"O happy time of blessed tears,
Of surer hopes, of chastening fears,
Undoing all our evil years.

Oh, hearken when we cry,
Chastise us with Thy fear ;
Yet, Father ! in the multitude
Of Thy compassions hear."

THOUGHTS FOR HOLY WEEK.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.—*Phil.* 2:5–11.

THROUGH Holy Week to Easter-Even, we hear over and over the story of the Cross,—that "meritorious Cross and Passion; whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the Kingdom of heaven." Fixing our thoughts on the awful Sacrifice that was made for us on "the hill called Calvary," we seem to see its bleeding, dying Victim looking down on us, saying in the words of the ancient prophecy, "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow which is done unto Me." It is a scene that stands alone, unparalleled! It is not simply suffering, but vast, strange, mysterious suffer-

ing, filling us with an awe-inspiring feeling that it has to do not only with this world, but with all worlds; not only with time, but with eternity; not only with the finite, but with the infinite, and with all that lies wrapped up in the vast possibilities of the life of the world to come. No Christian can contemplate the awful Sacrifice of Calvary without feeling instinctively that it has to do with sanctities and necessities vastly transcending the thoughts of men. Whatever we see in it, or think we see, we know that it is greater, vaster, than we can know or think. We may pray, as did St. Paul for his Ephesian converts, that we may "be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ," but we are at once moved to say with him, that it "passeth knowledge." It was a reverent and right feeling that moved Christians of old to say: "By Thine unknown sorrows, good Lord, deliver us." No, we can never know them, either their extent or efficacy or power. There was no sorrow like unto His sorrow, no suffering comparable with that "meritorious Cross and Passion whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins and are made partakers of the Kingdom of heaven."

The degree of suffering depends upon ca-

pacity for suffering. You rend a tree, and it may be said to suffer. It bleeds and dies, but unconsciously and without feeling. The brute beast can suffer in its way, but it is in a small way as compared with that of a man. If you hurt a beast it suffers physical pain, that is all. You hurt a man and he, too, suffers, but it is not half so much from mere physical pain as from a feeling of outrage, indignity, and injustice. The suffering of a degraded savage will be one thing, and that of a noble, high-minded man another and quite a different thing. The higher and nobler the character, the greater will be the capacity for pain; it is not half so much physical as spiritual.

But no one of all our erring, sin-stained race can suffer as did the sinless Son of Man. His capacity for joy as well as sorrow must have been infinitely greater than ours. Manifestly, to Him there was a joy in life, a joy in God and in His world, that no other man ever knew. His whole life was lived in perfect touch with God; in perfect balance with His world, with His whole universe. And so nature was to Him what it never was to any other man. He was in perfect, sympathetic relationship to the natural world, and so had such perfect mastery over it that even the winds and the sea obeyed Him. Even in His

very sorrows there seemed to be a certain holy joy, the joy of a perfect human life lived in perfect unison with the life of the everlasting Father. And so, no doubt there was a certain kind of joy even in the pain that made Him a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. Even of the awful, unknown sorrows of the cross it is said that "for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame." So He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." Just how He bore them, what were the deep necessities in the nature of the All Holy, and sad estate of His sinful, suffering children, has through the Christian ages been the subject of profoundest thought and manifold conjecture. But we must all feel how poor and, at best, inadequate have been all the efforts men have made to set forth a philosophy of Christ's atoning death and sacrifice. And yet no Christian has any least doubt, but that by His meritorious Cross and Passion the suffering Saviour met the most deep, undying, importunate need of our soul's life. So, whatever their theology or opinions or prejudices may be, all Christians in their time of need instinctively cry out to the cross-crowned Saviour, saying,

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;

Let the water and the blood,
From Thy side, a healing flood,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath, and make me pure."

"Should my tears forever flow,
Should my zeal no languor know,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save, and Thou alone;
In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

HUMILITY.

Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.— *St. Matt.* 11 : 29.

In old time humility was little thought of among men, but when "Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility," He took this despised word and made it stand for an essential characteristic of a godly and a Christian life.

It is an example of how radically He revolutionized the thoughts of men, bringing in new values, new estimates, new virtues, new ways of believing and living.

Just as coming to the cross and suffering on it, He changed it from a sign of shame into the symbol of salvation, so He took certain words, such as humility and love, and gave them a dignity and value that had never been dreamed of aforetime.

"But (it may be asked) why is humility in itself a virtue, and why should it be regarded as an essential characteristic of a Christian life?" Well, chiefly, because Jesus Christ our Lord has done for His every true follower two things of supreme importance in giving him a

knowledge of God and of himself. He sees God in Jesus Christ His Son, our Lord: "God manifest in the flesh," made known, near, accessible to him. Looking to Jesus Christ; seeing His condescension, His goodness, His long-suffering, pitying love, the Christian compares himself with his Master, and straightway is led to say, "I am a sinful man, O Lord. What am I in comparison with Thee? There is no goodness or greatness in me: or, if there be any goodness in me, it is of Thee. It is Thy gift, and of Thy grace. It is not mine, but Thine: I am a sinful man, O Lord." Nor this only: while Jesus Christ humbles He also exalts. And this He does by showing us our inestimable value in His sight. In effect He is always saying, "See what you are to Me; think of what I did for you; think of what I gave up; think of what I suffered and endured; how I was rejected, despised, set at naught; think of Gethsemane, of the Judgment-hall and of Calvary, and remember that it was for you. Consider then your worth to Me. And think of what I offer you—forgiveness, pardon, peace, the peace of God; yes, and help, grace, and eternal life. Think of the opportunity I open up to you. It is to stand with Me; to share in all that I have, all that I am. It is to be like God, My Father, and your Father. It is

to be a partaker of the Divine nature, of the very life of God."

Thought of this helps to give a man some true thought of God and of himself. Then, too, in telling us of our value to Him, our Lord tells us of the value of all men to Him. In that He died for all men, "there is not on earth a soul so base but he may obtain a place in covenanted grace." All this you steadfastly believe. Must it not then change you, and all men to you? Believing this, can you think of any man as beyond the love of God? And if God loves men can you despise them? There may indeed be in many that which you do not approve, but must you not see in them, —no matter how soiled or scarred or marred in them the Divine image may be—what Jesus Christ saw in them, that is, a soul, a human soul of inestimable possibilities, and so, of inestimable value? Humility then comes from seeing things as they are. It is at once sight and insight. It is not a mean-spirited thing. Quite the contrary. It is exalting, glorifying, sanctifying. It comes from having some true knowledge of God, and of ourselves and our fellow men; some knowledge of what we are and of what we might be; of what God meant us to be, and what Jesus Christ our Lord will help us to be, if we will let Him.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ." He said, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Let us try to see ourselves in the light of God. Then will we begin to see ourselves as we are, and as God would have us be. From all conceit and self-assertion; from all blindness of heart; from pride and vain-glory, good Lord, deliver us.

"The Lord, who left the heavens
Our life and peace to bring,
To dwell in lowliness with men
Their pattern and their King.

"He to the lowly soul
Doth still Himself impart;
And for His dwelling and His throne
Chooseth the pure in heart."

THE MIND OF THE MASTER.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. —*Phil.* 2 : 5.

A GREAT saint wrote a great book on "The Imitation of Christ." It is a famous book, a veritable classic. It has been printed and reprinted perhaps oftener than any other, save the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. It has instructed and comforted thousands now in the Paradise of God, and is still helping thousands on their way thitherward. But possibly the title of the book might have been happier, for the imitation of Christ is not necessarily the same thing as having the Spirit of Christ, without which, we are assured, we are none of His. There might be an outward imitation of Christ without at all the Spirit of Christ.

We can imagine some undiscerning soul saying, "I will imitate Christ; I will live in Nazareth, and earn my daily bread in the shop of a carpenter." In a sort of way it would be an *imitation* of Christ, but it would not of itself make a man at all like Christ. An outward

imitation is one thing; an interior likeness is another and very different thing. And so, we need to heed the apostolic injunction, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ."

"But (some one may say) what was the mind of Christ?" Vastly more than any one of us could say, and yet we can all recall certain characteristics of the mind of Christ that were clearly made manifest in His words and in His works. First of all, then, it was the mind of Christ to do God's holy will. His first recorded words declare it, and His final utterances affirm it. He said, "I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me": and, when He looked back on His work in the world, He could look into the Father's face and say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

Clearly then to have this mind which was in Christ, is first of all to do God's will, knowing it to be just, holy, perfect; not the will of a hard taskmaster, but the will of our Father concerning us His children, for our good always, as St. Paul saith, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

"To have the Spirit of Christ" is to be

good; to do good; to be righteous; to be true, tender, pitiful, compassionate, helpful. He "went about doing good," and we will too, if we have anything of that mind which was in Him.

To be a blessing, to do good, to seek and to save, this was His delight. And so, "for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame." "For us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven," and in doing that, there was nothing that He would not do, nothing that He would not endure, if only He could thus bring us to the Father. For us He was delivered into the hands of wicked men; for us He was scourged and shamefully entreated; for us He hung upon the cruel cross, and died the death of a felon and a slave. Surely we should love Him, for He first loved us. And if we cannot love Him it is because there is no love in us. If the knowledge of all that He did for us, does not move us to do anything for Him, then there is no love of God in us.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

Would that we might have more of that love of God in Christ, that moved Francis Xavier to say,

O my Jesus, Thou didst me
  Upon the cross embrace ;
For me didst bear the nails and spear,
  And manifold disgrace,

And griefs and torments numberless,
  And sweat of agony,
E'en death itself ; and all for me
  Who was Thine enemy.

Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
  Should I not love Thee well?
Not for the hope of winning heaven,
  Nor of escaping hell ;

Not with the hope of gaining aught ;
  Not seeking a reward :
But as Thyself hast loved me,
  O ever-loving Lord !

MAUNDY THURSDAY.

This do in remembrance of Me.—*St. Luke* 22 : 19.

THIS is the day of the mandate (Dies Mandati) of our blessed Lord. "In the night in which He was betrayed, He took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is My Body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me. Likewise, after supper, He took the cup; and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for this is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me."

It is a request: a last request. Nor is it a request only. It is a command. It is plain. It is very explicit. Our Lord said, "Do this." Not to heed what He said is to live in open disobedience to Him; and no good Christian can do that. We should then come to the Holy Communion because He told us to. It is our duty; our unmistakable duty; and for any one to live unmindful of a known duty, is to live in deadly sin. But we should "Do this"

not only because it is a duty, but a great and blessed privilege as well. It is an act of faith and obedience. It is a solemn memorial of "that meritorious Cross and Passion, whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins and are made partakers of the Kingdom of heaven." "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." In this way which the Lord Himself ordained, we do show His death, and that not simply to His people here on earth, but before the Divine Majesty and high heaven. That which our blessed Lord does for us in heaven, we do here on earth. By His very presence in the heaven of heavens, He pleads there His great once-offered sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. And this which He does for us there, He has commanded us to do here. "He did institute, and in His holy gospel command us to continue—a perpetual memory of that His precious death and sacrifice until His coming again." And this He did for our sake. In coming to the Holy Communion then, we honor and obey Him. We do what He has told us to do, and in this most solemn act of Christian worship, do show forth before Almighty God our one only, valid plea for forgiveness, grace, help and blessing. All this we receive, according to the sure word of His promise; yes, and more than

this. In this Eucharistic Sacrifice not only do we have fellowship with Christ our Lord and "the blessed company of all faithful people" here below, and those who have departed this life in the true faith of God's holy Name, but herein "with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify God's glorious Name."

And more even: in this Holy Sacrament we have union with Almighty God through Jesus Christ His Son our Lord. Just how the living Lord gives Himself to His people in this way of His appointment, we cannot know, nor do we need to know, but it has always been the unmistakable teaching of His Church that His true followers do thus receive Him to the strengthening and refreshing of their souls.

If then we are His followers we will gladly and thankfully "Do this" as the Lord hath enjoined. If wise unto salvation we will say, "I must come to Christ in this Holy Sacrament and thus offer to Almighty God that sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which is my bounden duty and service."

It is not only a duty but a privilege, a great and blessed privilege. No tongue can tell of all that Christ our Lord has done "for us men and for our salvation." Here is something that I can do for Him in token of my faith

and fealty. Nor for Him only, but for myself; for the much-needed strengthening of my soul's life. It was for our sake that He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

Pardon, grace, spiritual strength, light, peace, love, access to God, a place in His great family, the whole family in heaven and earth, likeness to Christ here, complete final assimilation to Him, eternal life and blessedness, all these are among the benefits that are ours, or may be ours, if we will to have it so, through that "meritorious Cross and Passion, whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the Kingdom of heaven."

Remembering then these inestimable benefits, I desire to be present at and personally have part in all the blessings received by the faithful in this Holy Eucharistic. I know I am unworthy but I can plead the worthiness, the infinite worthiness of Jesus Christ, knowing that that plea can never be made in vain.

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come."

"WHAT SHALL I DO THEN WITH JESUS, WHICH IS CALLED CHRIST?"

What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ?
—*St. Matt.* 27: 22.

It was the question of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. In asking it he asked the question of all the after ages. He had no thought of doing it, but he did. It has echoed and reëchoed in the minds of men from that day to this, and will until Christ shall come to make an end of His redemptive work and usher in "the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Pilate did not know it, but he asked the question which you and I, and all men, must ask and answer in some way. It was so ordered from the first. As at the Presentation of the Holy Child in the Temple, Simeon took Him up in his arms, and blessed God, in a grand strain of prophetic utterance, he said, "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel": and at once the prophecy began to be fulfilled. As soon as he heard of Him, Herod, the king, said what he would do with Him. And so, to make sure of killing

Him, Herod "sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof." But it was not until Jesus began His public ministry that men generally began to say what they would do with Him. He said to one and to another, —to Andrew and Peter, and James and John —"Follow Me," and they followed Him. They said what they would do with Jesus. They would believe in Him; would obey Him; would leave all and follow Him. A little later Jesus, "saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom; and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him." Still later—"A certain ruler asked Him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? . . . Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up thy cross and be My disciple. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." In effect he said what he would do with Jesus. He would not follow Him; would not be His disciple at such cost. He valued his money more than he did treasure in heaven. He went his way to his great possessions, and

Jesus went His way—to "the hill called Calvary." Everywhere, more and more, men were obliged to say what they would do with Jesus. He said, "He that is not with Me is against Me." "So there was a division among the people concerning Him." He claimed the love and loyalty of all men; said, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." So it was that everywhere He went, men were obliged to take sides, and be for Him or against Him. The scribes and Pharisees never hesitated for a moment in saying what they would do with Him. They would kill Him. Caiaphas spoke for them all in saying, "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people." They would, at any cost, be rid of Him as they supposed. Judas had decided what he would do with Him. He would betray Him —for thirty pieces of silver.

The members of the Sanhedrim were personally and officially obliged to say what they would do with Jesus. "They, all, condemned Him to death." But, as they could not pronounce sentence of death, they led Him to Pilate. Having examined Him Pilate said,

"I find no fault in Him." "He knew that for envy they had delivered Him." He did not want to do anything with Him. So he sent Him to Herod. Herod knew what He would do with Him. He "set Him at naught, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate."

Pilate was more anxious than ever to deliver Him. But the Jewish rulers obliged him to say what he would do with Jesus: they said, "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend." It was with him a question of expediency or duty. He yielded, as many a man would in such a case. He thought he could not jeopardize his interests at the imperial court. To be sure "he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person."

Nevertheless, "released he Barabbas unto them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified." And so he made himself infamous forever. The world over, wherever the Creed of Christendom is said, we witness to what Pilate did with Jesus; say, "He suffered under Pontius Pilate." Not Pilate only, but Caiaphas, Annas, Herod, the Sanhedrim, the people, all were obliged to say what they would do with Jesus.

They all did something with Him. The very malefactors that were crucified with Him, were obliged to say what they would do with Him. So, one of them died cursing Him, and at the last, the other confessed Him, saying, "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom."

Nor is it otherwise with us. We are obliged to say what we will do with Jesus. And it must be a more momentous matter with us even than with those of Jerusalem so long ago, and that because we know so much more about Him than many of them did. He prayed that those should be forgiven who drove the cruel nails through His holy hands, "for (He said) they know not what they do." That is not our case. We know what we do. We know what Jesus has done for the world. We know what the world was; how fierce, how cruel, how ruthless! We know that in so far as light, and hope, progress and blessing have come, all is traceable to Him, the world's Saviour. Not only do we know what He has done but what He is doing. We have seen human lives made sweet and beautiful with the beauty of holiness. We know that what He has done for others He would fain do for us, if only we would let Him. Upon us, as upon those who crucified Him so long ago in Jerusalem, lies the neces-

sity of saying what we will do with Jesus. He claims faith, fealty, service; says, "Learn of Me," "Follow Me," "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also." In a word He offers us salvation, now and here, and forever: and every one must say what he will do with Jesus, which is called Christ. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Will you let Him in? Dare you keep Him out? Will you receive Him, or reject Him? Will you follow Him, or go your own way, "without God, and without Christ in the world? He says, "My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand."

"Jesus, Saviour of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the waves of trouble roll,
While the tempest still is high:

"Hide me, O my Saviour hide,
Till the storm of life be past:
Safe into the haven guide,
Oh, receive my soul at last."

"THE SPIRITS IN PRISON."

Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.—1 *Peter* 3: 18, 19.

WHEN, as on this still day, the sacred body of our Saviour rested in the sealed sepulchre, where was His holy soul? It was in Paradise as He said to the penitent malefactor, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." And so we say in the Creed, "He descended into hell," that is Hades, the covered place, the place of departed spirits, the unseen spirit world. In our ordinary speech the words Paradise and "Hell" seem to tell of utterly opposite conditions, but we should remember that as used in the Creed, the word "hell" simply means the covered place, not at all necessarily a place of punishment. The words Paradise and "Hell" (Hades) were commonly used among the Jews to describe the place where the souls of the

righteous rest from their labors. So in saying, as we do in the Creed, "He descended into hell," we simply confess what the New Testament teaches: and that is that when on the cross our blessed Lord said, "It is finished," and bowed His head and died, He went into the place of departed spirits. In referring to it St. Peter says, "Christ also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."

Here then we have the record of a mercy of which no one would have presumed to think, but that it is expressly revealed in Holy Scripture. The infinite Love has been able to reach, and presumably to rescue, the souls of the departed even in that unseen spirit world of which we know so little. Those that the apostle tells of were "sometime disobedient." They had not profited by the preaching of the patriarch, "when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." They were disobedient; and so, drowned in the flood, they passed on into the place of the departed. The apostle tells of them as "in prison," that is, under guard. The meanwhile the slow centuries

passed by. They were forgotten of men, but not of God. When on the cross our Lord had made His great once-offered sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, He descended into hell; into that Paradise where He said He would that day be with the penitent malefactor. What He did there we know not save that "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which were sometime disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." That He preached to them of forgiveness and grace is matter of more than inference, as it is said, "for this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." The Gospel then was not only preached to the living, but to the dead, and the purpose of that preaching was that they might stand on the same footing as those to whom salvation had been offered here on the earth; "that they might be judged according to men in the flesh," that is, by the same rule as others more favorably circumstanced, namely, by the Gospel message itself. Let us thank God, then, for this illuminative record of His mercy to those long gone souls "which were sometime disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of

Noah." Let us be glad that we are told at least this much of our Lord's merciful work in the place of the departed. It may have been, and probably was, vastly more; but this only has been made known concerning it, and where revelation has not spoken it is not our part to try to be wise above what is written.

Still we know that our ever-merciful Master is now what He was then; is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and forever": and so we know that He is as merciful now as He was then. He went after those lost sheep until He found them—found them in that "far stretching land." We may then well believe that He will likewise follow every lost sheep until He find it, if so be He can bring it home to God. And, too, this that He did in the place of the departed, it may be our part to help Him still do, when we shall go hence and be no more seen here among men. Surely we will have some work to do for God there: and, no doubt, it will be a wider work, and of larger opportunities than here. The gifts that He has given us for our work here, may perhaps be still used for Him there, under far more favorable conditions for ministering to spirits "which sometime were disobedient" on their way through "this miserable and naughty world." Still we are to remember that the se-

cret things belong unto the Lord our God. We can leave them all to Him. Soon we will know how it is; know of our own selves. At the last, O Lord Jesus Christ, give us place in Paradise, any least, lowest place, only so it be in sight of Thee—in "that still country where the hailstones and the fire showers do not reach, and the heavy laden at length lay down their load."

"When my last hour cometh,
Fraught with strife and pain,
When my dust returneth
To the dust again;
On Thy truth relying,
Through that mortal strife,
Jesu, take me, dying,
To eternal life."

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